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CONTEMPORARY GERMAN PHILOSOPHY

Volume 4

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Volume 4
1984

Edited by

Darrel E. Christensen
Manfred Riedel
Robert Spaemann
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Coordinated by

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Robert C. Marsh
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PREFACE

Contemporary German Philosophy (CGP), a *Yearbook* normally to appear during the second quarter of each year, is devoted principally to making available in English contributions to philosophical comprehension originating in German. The aim is in no sense to displace the German language as a medium for philosophical discourse, but to provide for the reader who is more at home with English some points of access to such of the more pivotal recent and contemporary contributions to philosophy originating in German as can lend themselves to this format.

In keeping with this objective, in the selection of articles to be published which shall have appeared in German, some preference is accorded to authors whose work for the most part has not as yet appeared in English. This preference shall not pertain with respect to Original Articles or to reviews, discussions, etc. Within these parameters, *CGP* is open to the full range of philosophical interests and orientations to which such philosophy in the German language as reflects cognizance of its historical roots importantly contributes. It is open as well to items of content which consider the bearings of insights within such allied fields as mathematics, political science, historiography, and linguistics upon philosophical issues. The term "contemporary" is intended to refer, not to any particular style of doing philosophy, but to philosophical literature of recent origin, occasionally reaching back as far as a decade or so. Approximately equal space is to be devoted to historical studies, theoretical philosophy, and practical philosophy.

CGP principally publishes:

- (a) Original articles (normally two in each issue): An Original Article may be especially prepared by the author of a major work which has appeared in German but not in English translation, this normally having been within four years of the selection, upon invitation of the Editors. The article shall be devoted primarily to the philosophical development or extension of some key idea or theme treated within the work, but it shall in no sense be a review, nor shall it be merely introductory in character. It may also be invited on the basis of a contribution to the philosophical discussion other than through the publication of a book.
- (b) Articles which have appeared or are to appear in German.
- (c) Reviews, review articles, discussions, and notes relating principally to selected major works which have appeared in German, these being for the most part by English language authors.
- (d) Reviews, review articles, discussions, and notes relating principally to selected major English works, these for the most part having appeared in German.
- (e) Announcements which may be of interest to English readers, including a listing of works originating in German which have recently appeared or are scheduled to appear in English translation.

Commensurate with its aim of publishing quality translations by persons with the philosophical and linguistic training prerequisite to particular assignments and the patience for direct collaboration with authors, *CGP* seeks by every means to accord suitable recognition to this demanding role. To this end it maintains a listing of philosophers with the requisite interest and skills for translating work by German language authors into English and with information pertaining to specific areas of special philosophical competence. It maintains a listing of information concerning projects for translating German philosophy into English, as well. Contributions to either of these listings are appreciated and information from them may be obtained by writing to the Coordinator, Darrel E. Christensen, Josef-Messner-Str. 28, A-5020 Salzburg, Austria. A request for information to be sent by air mail should be accompanied by an international postal money order or U. S. stamps to cover postal costs.

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Articles

THE QUESTION, TO WHAT QUESTION IS HERMENEUTICS THE ANSWER?*

Odo Marquard

Translation by Robert M. Wallace

Dedicated to Hans Robert Jauss
for his sixtieth birthday

Hermeneutics is the art of getting out of a text what is not in it. Otherwise — since after all we have the text — what would we need it for? But do we need it at all? What exactly is it that we need when we need interpretation, when we need hermeneutics? How can, how must, hermeneutics itself be understood and interpreted?

I am one who comes, as a skeptic, from the hermeneutic school and has never quite escaped it, but instead, remaining within it — as (so to speak) an endogenous Trojan Horse — is more and more strongly inclined to think that the core of hermeneutics is skepticism and the important form of skepticism today is hermeneutics. One with such a background must sooner or later confront the question what hermeneutics is. This then becomes, to a certain extent, the

* Translated from “Frage nach der Frage, auf die die Hermeneutik die Antwort ist”, in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch 88*, Jahrgang 1981, 1. Halbband. The German original also appeared in Odo Marquard, *Abschied vom Prinzipiellen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981).

The author is a skeptical hermeneuticist with an admixture of existentialism. His essay takes the thesis, developed by Collingwood and Gadamer, that one understands something by ascertaining the question to which it was or is the answer, and applies it to hermeneutics itself. Hermeneutics is an answer to the circumstance that, on account of the brevity of our lives that results from our being mortal, we cannot get as free as we might like from our historical derivation. Consequently we have to interpret it, that is, both to distance ourselves from it and to adapt it to the present. The modern preeminence of literary hermeneutics in particular, however, is an answer to the wars of religion, which were hermeneutic civil wars in which, as a result of conflict over the absolute interpretation of the absolute book, people killed each other. The modern invention of the non-absolute — literary — book and its reader who interprets it in a literary manner is an answer to this trauma.

search for an answer to my question of what I am, with the attendant temptation not to find one. Of course this private motive is hardly a respectable reason to request that people pay heed to my subject. It is nonetheless permissible to do this because there are also other reasons for returning again to this much-discussed topic, hermeneutics. I would like to elucidate some of these reasons in what follows, and I would like to do so in seven sections. To begin with, I will name them. 1) Question and answer; 2) Finitude; 3) Hermeneutics as a reply to derivativeness; 4) Hermeneutics as a reply to transitoriness; 5) Literary hermeneutics as a reply to the civil war over the absolute text; 6) Its apparent obsolescence; 7) Hermeneuticists and code-breakers. At the head of my discussion I place the motto: "Read and let read!"ⁱ and I begin it — entirely conventionally — with the section on:

1. Question and Answer

The question, formulated at the outset, as to what hermeneutics is, is itself a problem of understanding, itself a hermeneutic question.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, appealing to Collingwood, emphasized the importance of the reply structure for the hermeneutic business of interpretation:¹ one understands something by understanding it as an answer to a question. To put it differently, one does not understand it if one is not aware of and does not understand the question to which it was or is the answer. Since then Hans Blumenberg² has drawn our attention to more complicated possibilities: for example, it can be the case that the question corresponding to a solution has died out, historically, so that the solution adopts substitute questions, as an answer to which it can again become intelligible. Blumenberg confirms the question/answer schema by differentiating it. I consider this reply-model of understanding — with the additional reason that at the ninth colloquium on Poetics and Hermeneutics, last year, Hans Robert Jauß again energetically put forward the question/answer schema as the basic hermeneutic schema of the theory of [[literary]] reception³ — to be generally important and cor-

¹ H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1st ed. 1960, 3rd ed. 1972), abb. WuM, pp. 344ff., esp. 351ff; or *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), abb. TM, 325ff, esp. 333ff. See R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939; 3rd ed. 1978), 29ff.

² Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966).

³ H. R. Jauß, "Überlegungen zur Abgrenzung und Aufgabenstellung einer literarischen Hermeneutik", in, H. R. Jauß (Ed.), *Text und Applikation, Poetik und Hermeneutik 9* (Munich: Fink, 1981); my essay explicates ideas from my introduction to the discussion of this contribution in Bad Homburg on May 27, 1978. See my statement under the same title in the cited volume.

rect. I am not disturbed in this by the suspicion, which has in the meantime been expressed occasionally, that the definition of this historical conjunction relationship as a quasi-linguistic relationship of reply is questionable, because it is merely a metaphorical manner of speaking. I certainly admit that committed attempts at 'demetaphorization' remain unsatisfying: Ricoeur's action-as-text theory,⁴ for example — the revenge of hermeneutics on the text-as-action theory⁵ of the 'speech-act' camp — rather strengthens the suspicion of metaphor. Nevertheless, the objection I have mentioned does not alarm me. I simply accept the conclusion that the question/answer schema is a metaphor. For if it is a metaphor, it is undoubtedly a good one, a fruitful one. And every philosophy is bound to employ metaphor. Just as with grog, where one can have water, should have sugar, and must have rum, so with philosophy, one can have formalization, should have terminology, and must have metaphor. Otherwise it isn't worth it — in the first case, worth drinking, and in the second, worth philosophizing.

From all this and much else it follows — it seems to me — that if the question of what hermeneutics is... is a hermeneutic question and must be answered hermeneutically, then the question/answer schema which stems from Collingwood and Gadamer — which seems to be the worked-out form of the connection that Joachim Ritter entitled "hypocleptic"⁶ — is central for this. The question/answer schema is then not only the schema *with which hermeneutics operates in order to understand things*. It is also at the same time — for that very reason — the schema *with the help of which hermeneutics itself can and must be understood*. Consequently one who intends a hermeneutic clarification of hermeneutics has to ask, in his turn: what were and are the questions to which hermeneutics itself — and to which the contemporary dominance of literary hermeneutics — was and is the answer? To put it another way: the *hermeneutic* question of what hermeneutics is is *the question: To what question is hermeneutics the answer?*

⁴ P. Ricoeur, "Der Text als Modell: hermeneutisches Verstehen" (1972) in H.-G. Gadamer/G. Boehm, (Eds.), *Seminar: Die Hermeneutik und die Wissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 83-117.

⁵ K. Stierle, *Text als Handlung* (Munich: Fink, 1975).

⁶ J. Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik. Studien zu Aristoteles und Hegel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969), pp. 64ff; compare G. Bien's article, "Hypolepsis", in J. Ritter (Ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe), vol. 3 (1974), cols. 1252-1254.

2. Finitude

My fundamental thesis on this subject is not surprising, for a hermeneutic philosophy, but more nearly trivial. It is that *hermeneutics is a reply to human finitude*. In connection with this thesis — which, however trivial, is still in need of elucidation — human finitude must be connected to *time*, if it is to do justice to the following characteristic of hermeneutics: plainly, one only understands and interprets things that *are already there* — even one who interprets anticipations interprets actual anticipations, not future ones — so that *hermeneutics is primarily a relationship to the past*.⁷ So when a philosophy lays stress on hermeneutics, the temporal condition must obtain that the past, and the past in particular — at least as a past that puts an imprint on the present: as *derivation* (*Herkunft*) — is essential.

Here one should not allow oneself to be abashed by the fact that this does not suit those philosophies for which only the *future* is essential, to such an extent that they only value, in the past, what “has not been required”;⁸ that which, in the wishes of what is past, was what even today is still only future. The philosophies of history — from the revolutionary ones to those which are only still hoping — are philosophies of the future. For them men, directly or indirectly, pursue an emancipation leading to a state of wholeness, the completion of history. For that, to be sure — to put it quite simply — men (at least their avantgarde) would need omniscience, infinite goodness, and omnipotence. They lack these, however, because they are finite. Precisely this leads to the great experiences of disappointment for the philosophy of history: to the disappointment of emancipatory “immediate expectation”ⁱⁱ by which the contemporary situation of philosophy is also, and indeed especially, determined. For that reason philosophy nowadays is again attentive to human finitude; and it is so by once again making hermeneutics fundamental. The philosophers of history have only *changed* the world, in various ways — the point is, to *spare it*ⁱⁱⁱ — but the form of sparing that changes the most is interpreting.

So hermeneutics urges finitude. In the process, it makes a fact into a question,⁹ by being the answer to it: specifically, to human finitude. But what does that mean: finitude? I will now sketch

⁷ This in conscious contrast to M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1927), abb. SuZ, 336ff, or *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), abb. BT, 385ff, and his thesis that “understanding is grounded primarily in the future” (SuZ, 340, compare 339; BT, 390, compare 388-89).

⁸ Compare E. Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1953), p. 19: “because [this philosophy] knows no past whatsoever except the past that is still alive, that has not yet been required”, it is a “philosophy of the future, that is, also of the future in the past”.

briefly *three* mutually compatible concepts of finitude, so as to bring out their outlines by contrast, before I make use of the third one.

Finitude can be defined:

a) *in relation to God*. This is done theologically: What is finite is what is not God, what is nothing by itself and therefore only exists through God, that is, the created. In philosophy this is the metaphysical tradition's concept of finitude: *to be finite is to be something created*. Finitude can also (more or less non-theologically) be defined:

b) *in relation to space*. This is done above all in modern philosophical anthropology, and there representatively by Helmuth Plessner: in his *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (*The Levels of Organic Life and Man*) he defines the finite as the bounded (with a different relationship, in each case, to its boundary).¹⁰ This definition of finitude by a boundary lives on today in the fundamental role assigned by systems theory to the differentiation between a system and its surrounding world.¹¹ It is fruitful for analyses of the reaction of the bounded thing to threats to its boundary that it meets with. As "boundary reactions"¹² of this kind we can understand, in living things, the immune systems (Thomas A. Sebeok), in man, anxiety (Thure von Uexküll), laughing and crying (Plessner), history's "cultivation of the experience of contingency" (Hermann Lübbe), literary texts as ways of digesting a "boundary infringement" that is called an "event" (Jurij M. Lotmann), and so forth.¹³ But all of these "boundary reactions" derive their existence from the fact that

⁹ In this form I appropriate the critique that H. Krings (in, H. M. Baumgartner, ed., *Prinzip Freiheit* [Freiburg/Munich: Alber, 1979], esp. 391ff) directed at my plea against a "concept of freedom that is restricted to one, futuristic half" (p. 337; compare 322ff). The difference that is decisive in this regard does in fact fall short of pure unconditionality and sheer givenness.

¹⁰ H. Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch. Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter [1st ed., 1928, 3rd ed.], 1975), esp. 99ff, 123ff.

¹¹ Compare esp. N. Luhmann, "Funktionale Methode und Systemtheorie" (1964), in his *Soziologische Aufklärung. Aufsätze zur Theorie sozialer Systeme* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1974), 31-53, esp. 38ff (see above all the statement regarding the "system-boundary", 40).

¹² H. Plessner, "Lachen und Weinen. Eine Untersuchung der Grenzen menschlichen Verhaltens" (1941), in his *Philosophische Anthropologie* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1970), esp. 155ff.

¹³ T. A. Sebeok, "The Semiotic Self", and T. von Uexküll, "Positionspapier", both so far unpublished discussion pieces for the roundtable discussion, "Semiotik der Angst" (Bad Homburg, Dec. 8-11, 1977); H. Plessner, "Lachen und Weinen", cited in note 12; H. Lübbe, *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse. Analytik und Pragmatik der Historie* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1977), esp. p. 20, 54ff, and 269ff; J. M. Lotmann, *Die Struktur literarischer Texte* (Munich: Fink, 1972), p. 332 — compare the following pages and pp. 311ff.

there are boundaries, that is, that there is finitude; and finitude here — understood from the perspective of space — means the elementary non-ubiquity of what is bounded: *Finitude is being one thing among others*. Finitude can also (more or less non-theologically) be defined:

c) *in relation to time*. This is done above all in the modern philosophy of existence, and there representatively by Heidegger, specifically in *Being and Time*:¹⁴ Something is finite if its time is meted out, runs out, ends — through death. That is the definition of finitude by means of a temporal ending, which is the basis of the principle that *finitude is mortality*, and human finitude is conscious mortality: *Being towards death*.

Only this third concept of finitude explicitly brings finitude together — as I required of a concept of finitude which would be important for hermeneutics — with time. Therefore, in what follows I will operate with it, and with it in particular, in explicating my fundamental thesis — that hermeneutics is a reply to human finitude — and thus perhaps make that thesis a little more exciting. In doing so I must, of course, at the same time resolve the seeming paradox that the importance (in relation to hermeneutics) of the past is supposed to be guaranteed by a concept of finitude that brings into play precisely a future — everyone's future — namely, death. In any case it follows that *hermeneutics*, if it is a reply to finitude, *is a reply to death*. But death exists for us in two forms: as *one's own death*, and as *the death of others*.¹⁵ Depending on which death hermeneutics replies to, it is either a reply to *derivativeness* (*Herkömmlichkeit*, which I will discuss in the third section) or a reply to *transitoriness* (which I will discuss in the fourth section).

3. Hermeneutics as a Reply to Derivativeness

The paradox I just mentioned is not really a paradox, because the situation with the past and with the future that is *one's own death* is as follows: *because* we die and we know this, we are referred to our past. Everyone's future is 'authentically'^w his death: life is short, *vita brevis*. This shortage of time for man — the *moriturus* [being going to die] that knows itself as *moriturus* — delivers him over to what he already was, to his derivation. Very simply: on account of the shortness of his life, no man has the time in which to distance himself from the past that he is, to whatever extent he would like. He always remains predominantly his derivation, which while it is,

¹⁴ M. Heidegger, SuZ, esp. 235ff, 245ff, 329ff, or BT, 278ff, 289ff, 377ff.

¹⁵ M. Heidegger, SuZ, 237ff or BT, 280ff, and W. Schulz, "Zum Problem des Todes", in A. Schwan (Ed.), *Denken im Schatten des Nihilismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 313-33, esp. 331ff.

historically, contingent — that is, could also have been different — is not (for the one who is it) contingent in the sense of an arbitrariness that can be chosen and rejected at will, but rather in the sense of a fate that can be escaped only with difficulty or hardly at all. The “choice that I am”¹⁶ includes, unavoidably, the past that is the history of my derivation, as the non-choice that I am. This unavoidability of always remaining predominantly what they already were, which is imposed on people by their mortality, I entitle “derivativeness”.

People resist this derivativeness: they want to *change*. The motive that propels them in this can be designated in various ways: as the thirst for freedom, as curiosity, as a longing for the happiness that lies in surrender to what is entirely ‘other’ and to that extent new, as “fear of missing something”,¹⁷ as the despondency of derivation that results from a deficiency of future, as temporal claustrophobia, and so on. But — *vita brevis* — people do not succeed in changing everything; they try in vain to get free of their derivation: even the revolutionaries — following the apt formulation of Olof Palme — are, on the day after the revolution, at best reformists: they have to link up with what is there. For the derivativeness which is determined by finitude, which is to say by mortality, is the foundation of the anti-principle of ‘linking-up’. In every future that is produced by a process of change there remains a quantity, always greatly exceeding the quantity of change, of derivation. This anti-principled principle^v of historical inertia implies, I think, not only the expediency of incrementalism but also, for the very same reason, the inevitableness of Martin Kriele’s well-known rule of the burden of proof.¹⁸ Non-change is always so very much the greater part that, on account of the

¹⁶ “Le choix que je suis”: Jean Paul Sartre, *L’être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 638.

¹⁷ Compare P. Probst, *Politik und Anthropologie. Untersuchungen zur Theorie und Genese der philosophischen Anthropologie in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 1974), pp. 40f. With this reference and the one in note 21 I would like to indicate what I can’t enlarge on here: that the duality of “derivativeness” and “transitoriness” is connected to the duality of types of fear that is analyzed by Probst and to the duality of versions of happiness (self-surrender and self-preservation) that is analyzed by R. Spaemann, “Philosophie als Lehre vom glücklichen Leben”, in, G. Bien (Ed.), *Die Frage nach dem Glück* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1978), esp. 15ff.

¹⁸ M. Kriele, *Theorie der Rechtsgewinnung* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1967), summing up on 312: “...presumptive binding force of prior judgments. There is a (refutable) presumption in favor of the rationality of all prior judgements.” See the same author’s *Die Herausforderung des Verfassungsstaats* (Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand, 1970), esp. 18-20; also N. Luhmann, “Status quo als Argument”, in, H. Baier, ed., *Studenten in Opposition. Beiträge zur Soziologie der Hochschule* (Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, 1968), 73-82, esp. 78: “involuntary conservatism deriving from complexity”; also H. Lübke (vol. cited in n. 13, above), 329f: “Tradition is valid not because of its demonstrated correctness but because of the impossibility of getting along without it”, so “that in relation to tradition, there must be an initial presumption of its rationality, and the burden of explicit argument lies on the person who rejects it.”

shortness of our life, it exceeds our capacity for rational justification. If, then, under the conditions of deadline-pressure that are imposed by our *vita brevis*, one wants to justify anything rationally at all, one must obey Kriele's rule and justify not non-change but change: the burden of proof is on the one who makes changes. So derivativeness dominates change: predominantly, people just don't get free of their historical derivation. What they can change is always less than they want to change and is never everything, but always precisely not the greater part.

Hermeneutics is an answer to this situation of finitude determined by mortality, *an answer to this derivativeness*; for hermeneutics is a way of changing where no change is possible. Here one must *do something else*, namely *interpret*. In doing this — *vita brevis* — the interpretative attempt to get free that is embodied in 'unmasking' interpretation (that is, in the critique of ideology) is only possible within limits. Any global unmasking is done at the cost of a regression of the unmasker. The critique that throws suspicion on everything easily makes the critic naive on a second level, serving, so to speak, as the continuation of stupidity by means of intelligence. But this unmasking interpretation is, anyhow, only the extreme limiting case of what interpretation — as a reply to derivativeness — normally accomplishes, which is to remove the historical derivation that (as a world of texts or as a paratextual world of tradition) confines us and sustains us, to a distance at which we can get along with it. Thus hermeneutics is the art of putting things into a bearable relation to oneself. This sort of interpretation, which makes up for the impossibility of doing away with derivation by providing the possibility of distancing oneself from one's derivation, I call *distancing hermeneutics*. *It is a reply to derivativeness*, and it is more prevalent the more the desire to change things, and the limiting experiences pertaining to that desire, are prevalent. In other words, it is quite modern. Here again, the rule holds true: we do not succeed — our life is too short — in distancing everything by means of interpretation. There are things that cannot be distanced, things that (for example, as the 'usual')¹⁹ people simply repeat in the process of living — in other words, things that we do not interpret, but just are. Derivativeness, then, is in the last analysis indissoluble. As the question to which hermeneutics is the answer, derivativeness is always bigger, as a question, than hermeneutics can be as an answer.

¹⁹ Compare my "Über die Unvermeidlichkeit von Üblichkeiten", in, W. Oelmüller (Ed.), *Normen und Geschichte*, Materialien zur Normendiskussion 3 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1979), 332-42.

4. Hermeneutics as a Reply to Transitoriness

I repeat: because we die, we always remain predominantly our past. We *cannot* get free of our derivation to whatever extent we would like, and we *should not* get free of it to whatever extent we would like, either. No one — life is too short for this — can reorder, from the ground up, what affects him in this life. That is always too much for a being whose capacity for mastering things is limited because it always dies all too soon. For that reason, derivativeness is not only a burden for people, but also — and perhaps still more — a shelter.²⁰ So an arbitrarily large amount of change cannot be expected of people. Future requires derivation. In every future that is produced by change, a minimum of derivation, far exceeding the quantity of change, must be preserved. Otherwise the change miscarries, and the ones for whose sake one wanted the change — people — are destroyed. For this anti-principle of linking up, however, the second form of death — *the death of others* — creates difficulties, seeing that *with every death, some of the intelligibility of past things, for those who remain alive, dies*. Anyone who has ever had to care for the estate or for the literary remains even (in fact especially) of close relatives — the primeval situation (I think) of the historian — knows what I mean. Our derivation, without which we cannot live, continually slides — through the death of others — into unintelligibility: Its intelligibility escapes us. Here I entitle this “transitoriness”.

People resist this transitoriness. They have to *hold fast, to preserve*. The motive which propels them in this can be designated in various ways: as the need for continuity and the obligation of identity, as a longing for the happiness that lies in self-preservation, as “fear of losing something”,²¹ as the despair of the future that results from a deficiency of derivation, as temporal agoraphobia, and so forth. But — *vita brevis* — people do not succeed in preserving everything. They try in vain to retain the immediate intelligibility of what they derive from, seeing that no one lives long enough to transmit to those who survive him everything that he himself understands. That holds also and especially where — in the modern world — the expected life-span increases in length. For precisely here, on account of the modern increase in the rate at which skills in understanding also become obsolete,²² the expected life-span of any individual's effec-

²⁰ Compare the concept of “supportedness” (“*Getragenheit*”) developed, in opposition to Heidegger's “thrownness” (“*Geworfenheit*”), by O. Becker, “Von der Hinfälligkeit des Schönen und der Abenteuerlichkeit des Künstlers”, in the Husserl Festschrift *Ergänzungsband to the Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1929), pp. 27ff.

²¹ P. Probst (vol. cited in n. 17), 40f. (Compare n. 17.)

tiveness in transmission declines rapidly at the same time. So the modern world radicalizes transitoriness. Thus, through the death of others and through the obsolescence of their skills in conveying orientation (an obsolescence that accelerates in modern times), the historical derivation that men after all are escapes faster and faster into unintelligibility.

Hermeneutics is an answer to this situation of finitude determined by mortality, *an answer to this transitoriness*. For hermeneutics is a way of holding fast where one cannot hold fast. Here one must *do something else*, namely, *interpret*. In doing this, the attempt to hold fast by means of antiquarianizing interpretation — by collecting — is a gesture that is just as symptomatic as it is helpless, seeing that in this matter it is not sufficient to seek antiquities and perhaps find hundreds in Germany “and, in Spain, one thousand and three”.²³ But this antiquarianizing interpretation is, anyway, only the extreme limiting case of what interpretation, as a reply to transitoriness, normally accomplishes: namely, to save the intelligibility of things and of texts in new situations (in secondary contexts), to which it adapts them.²⁴ It has, then, a conserving effect: a rehabilitation of old buildings, so to speak, in the realm of the spirit. This sort of interpretation, which makes up for the loss of primary intelligibility by rendering things intelligible again, I call *adapting hermeneutics*. *It is a reply to transitoriness*, and it is more prevalent the more the alteration of reality accelerates and thus produces more and more loss-of-familiarity, that is to say, strangeness. This is the case in the modern world. Because in this world, in particular, in which our derivation and our future — in other words, our life-world and our science-world (the world of tradition and the world in which we meet our needs) — become separated to an exceptional degree, there arise precisely in it (as compensation, as Joachim Ritter says) the hermeneutic or cultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*).²⁵ The more rapidly

²² As a result of the increasingly rapid obsolescence of experiences; this results, among other things, in the emergence, as characteristic traits of the modern world, of the victory of ‘anticipation’ over ‘experience’ — see R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979) — and the phenomenon of the forfeiture of experience: H. Lübbe, “Erfahrungsverluste und Kompensationen. Zum philosophischen Problem der Erfahrung in der gegenwärtigen Welt”, *Gießener Universitätsblätter* 2 (1979), 42-53.

²³ There are not only erotic Don-Juanism and Don-Juanism in the choice of psychiatrists but also a Don-Juanism of antiquarianizing: it is a contributing motive in the genesis of the museum. On the theory of the museum and of its genesis, precisely in the modern world, see J. Ritter, *Subjektivität* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), esp. 126ff.

²⁴ Compare K. Gründer, “Hermeneutik und Wissenschaftstheorie”, *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 75 (1967/68), 155: “Between the utterance that is to be understood and the person who would like to understand it there lies a historical break, by virtue of which the person who would like to understand has stepped out of, has emancipated himself from, the historical context to which the utterance belongs. Hermeneutics is the theory of understanding under the difficulties imposed by emancipations.”

everything in today's world continually changes, the more the art of becoming familiar with something again — hermeneutics — becomes a necessity, generated by this speed. In the process, through the modern increase in the tempo of change, it also receives exceptional opportunities. It seems to be the rule that the increase in the speed at which things become obsolete is compensated for by an increase in the prospects for old things being reactivated.²⁶ Consequently, for example, part of the modern world is the cycle of waves of nostalgia: in the realm of theory, for example, from systems theory via Neo-Marxism to the recent boom in evolutionary theory, with the necessity of adapting these, hermeneutically, to the continually changing state of the world. Thereby, at the same time, the opportunity for gaining something new through hermeneutics arises: because in today's world everything that is most our own, being subject to the tempo of change, almost immediately becomes foreign, and by the same token what is foreign — and consequently even the most exotic world of the past — winds up at the same, normal remove from us as what is most our own, and in that way becomes equally accessible for the hermeneutics that became necessary, in the European world, for the reactualization of what was most our own. The result is that today, through interpretation, we can recollect even what we never forgot, because we did not even know it yet; and thus, hermeneutically, we regain the Paradise from which we were never driven out, because we had never been born into it. We gain, through hermeneutics, a second-level openness to the world.²⁷ So the modern world is not only the age of radicalized transitoriness, but also at the same time the age of the radicalized answer to the question that transitoriness is: it is also the true age of adapting hermeneutics.

5. Literary Hermeneutics as a Reply to the Civil War over the Absolute Text

But what is the question to which, not hermeneutics (distancing and adapting) in general and taken as a whole, but specifically the modern literarization of hermeneutics is the answer? I have bypassed this problem up to this point, even though I have by no means already treated hermeneutics — by reference to death, that is, to fini-

²⁵ J. Ritter, "Die Aufgabe der Geisteswissenschaften in der modernen Gesellschaft", in the vol. cited in n. 23; compare H. Lübbe, *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse* (cited in n. 13), esp. 304ff.

²⁶ See my "Kompensation. Überlegungen zu einer Verlaufsfigur geschichtlicher Prozesse", in K. G. Farber and C. Meier (Eds.), *Historische Prozesse, Theorie der Geschichte 2* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), esp. 349f.

²⁷ See my "Felix culpa? Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3", in H. R. Jaufé (Ed.), *Text und Applikation* (cited in n. 3), sec. 5.

tude as derivativeness and as transitoriness — only as an anthropological magnitude and, as it were, an unvarying answer, but have also very definitely treated it — by reference to its specifically modern fortunes — as a historical magnitude and as an answer to which a date can be attached. So that very state of affairs has remained unclarified which, however, virtually cries out for clarification: I refer to the fact that hermeneutics, precisely in the course of its modern fortunes, becomes, absolutely centrally, *literary hermeneutics*. It becomes the art precisely of the *literary* reader's understanding of the *literary* text. At present only literary hermeneutics counts as "hermeneutics" in the general sense, whereas theological and juristic hermeneutics function as mere auxiliary arts in disciplines having only specialized competence.²⁸ How does this come to be the case?

In considering this problem it is, I think, useful to keep in mind from the beginning that (if we leave aside Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias*, which is another matter) the term "hermeneutics" first becomes the title-concept of a book — that of Dannhauer²⁹ — in 1654: that is, not only well after the Reformation's proclamation of the rule of scripture and not only shortly after the appearance of Descartes' fundamental writings,³⁰ but also immediately after the end of the Thirty Years' War. Thus I advance a conjecture which — although this may only demonstrate my ignorance in this regard — I have not yet found in the literature, although it is a natural one: *the question (or at least one question) to which the literarization of hermeneutics was the answer is the experience of religious civil war*.

Of course hermeneutics, as a phenomenon to which a date can be attached and as a developed art, does not first occur then and in modern times, but already occurs earlier, namely at least (at the very latest) where Christianity established itself as a Church and in the process needed and (appropriating the devices of Homeric exegesis and the tricks of application of Roman law) developed a technique by which to establish the one correct reading and, so to speak, the

²⁸ On the diagnosis of this situation see H.-G. Gadamer, *WuM*, esp. 307ff, or *TM*, 289ff.

²⁹ J. C. Dannhauer, *Hermeneutica sacra sive methodus exponendarum sacrarum litterarum* (Straßburg, 1654). It is not my thesis that this is a literary hermeneutics: rather, it belongs in the tradition of the theological hermeneutics of, for example, M. Flacius, *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae* (1657), which faces up to the burdens resulting from the Reformation's rule of Scripture ("*sola scriptura*"). Compare also H. E. H. Jaeger, "Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Hermeneutik", *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 13 (1974), 35-84.

³⁰ R. Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode* (1637); *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641). H.-G. Gadamer writes in his article "Hermeneutik", in, J. Ritter (Ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe), vol. 3 (1974), col. 1062: "When we speak of hermeneutics today, we stand...in the scientific tradition of the modern age. The use of the term 'hermeneutics' that corresponds to that tradition begins precisely at that time, that is, together with the genesis of the modern concept of method and of science." While I don't dispute this, I still think that the turning that leads to method is only a partial motive for the modern trend toward hermeneutics, because it is only one version of "neutralization" among others.

one absolute reading (for salvation), of the *Bible*. This theological hermeneutics had always to rediscover — figuratively or allegorically or by dogmatic abstraction — in the many biblical stories the one necessary story, the story of redemption, and thus always — and for this purpose the assumption of at least a double sense of the text was indispensable — in the manifold “Letter” of Scripture the single “spirit”.³¹ I would like to entitle this “singularizing hermeneutics” and to distinguish it from “pluralizing hermeneutics”,³² which — in reverse — traces out many possible meanings and the most various kinds of spirit in one and the same literal form. Singularizing hermeneutics, then, calls the multiformity of the literal stories to the order of the one sole absolute meaning and spirit: it belongs, as the self-assertion of orthodoxy against heterodoxy and heresy, to the difficult phase of the institutional establishment of the religion. Now it is important, I think, to see that theological hermeneutics initially remained a singularizing hermeneutics even when, as a result of the Reformation, the rule of tradition and the rule of Scripture came into conflict with one another: the dispute there was between two singularizing hermeneutics, for both wanted the correct interpretation, with its significance for salvation, of the absolute text, the Holy Scriptures. I will resist the temptation, which would be natural from my considerations up to this point, to treat this dispute between Catholic and Protestant hermeneutics as an extreme case of the opposition between adapting and distancing hermeneutics. Instead I will emphasize immediately that the moment in which the scale was tipped between singularizing and pluralizing hermeneutics first arrived when this hermeneutic dispute became *bloody*, and in fact for generations: in the religious civil war, which was, at least among other things, a *hermeneutic war* — a *civil war over the absolute text*. Here death again became significant for hermeneutics: this time the violent finitude, *death* as *killing*, “being towards killing” (“*das Sein zum Totschlagen*”), to use this formula of Koselleck’s³³ in a way that is relevant here. My thesis is that *hermeneutics gives an answer to this experience of the deadliness of the hermeneu-*

³¹ See 2 Corinthians 3:6; commentary in G. Ebeling, “Geist und Buchstabe”, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (3rd ed., Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1958), cols. 1290-1296. On the history of the substitution of multiple kinds of interpretation for the multiple meaning of scripture see H. R. Jauf (article cited in note 3); on figurative interpretation compare, in the history of literature, E. Auerbach, *Mimesis. Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern/ Munich: Francke [1st ed. 1946, 6th ed.] 1977), esp. 75f, and in philosophy K. Gründer, *Figur und Geschichte. J. G. Hamanns ‘Biblische Betrachtungen’ als Ansatz einer Geschichtsphilosophie* (Freiburg/Munich: Alber, 1958), esp. pp. 93ff.

³² See my “Schwacher Trost”, in, H. R. Jauf (Ed.), *Text und Applikation* (cited in n. 3).

³³ R. Koselleck, “Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätsstiftungen der Überlebenden”, in, O. Marquard and K. Stierle (Eds.), *Identität, Poetik und Hermeneutik* 8 (Munich: Fink, 1979), p. 257.

tic civil war over the absolute text by inventing — thus turning itself into pluralizing, which is to say literary, hermeneutics — the non-absolute text and the non-absolute reader: in other words the text and the reader that (except in the case of those anticipators, the humanists) had really not existed before, namely, the *literary text* and the *literary reader*.

The dogmatic quality of the claim to truth that is made by the unambiguous interpretation of the absolute text can be deadly: that is the experience of the religious civil wars. When, in relation to the sacred text, two interpreters assert, in controversy: “I am right; my understanding of the text is the truth, and in fact — and this is necessary for salvation — in this way and not otherwise:” then there can be hacking and stabbing. Hermeneutics, when it turns into pluralizing hermeneutics, gives an answer to precisely this situation when it asks: couldn’t this text be understood, after all, in still another way, and — if that isn’t sufficient — still another way, and again and again in other ways? In this way it takes the edge off of potentially deadly controversies about interpretation, by transforming the dogmatic relationship to the text into the interpretative one: into an understanding of the text that is open — *ad libitum*, if necessary — to discussion: and someone who is open to discussion may possibly stop killing. The hermeneutics that transforms itself in this way into a pluralizing hermeneutics *does something else*: it replaces “Being towards killing” with Being towards the text, that is, with Being towards a conciliatory text, and the value of this kind of hermeneutics lies in the fact that it allows us to avoid and spare ourselves this textual homicide. This means making the text, also, tolerant in matters of the ‘will to power’ through historical influence. This conciliatory understanding of the text, in its most consistent, that is, its most conciliatory form, is the literary reader’s Being towards the literary text. The latter arises, then — through the literarizing of hermeneutics — as a reply to the deadly conflict over the absolute understanding of Holy Scripture. Part of this genesis of the neutral reader — in what was also an age of *hermeneutic* neutralizations³⁴ — is the search for the context that relativizes the controversy over the

³⁴ On the concept of the “Age of Neutralizations” see C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (1922, 1934; Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1963), 79ff. These neutralizations include not only the genesis of the state that is neutral with regard to creed, and the rendering autonomous of ‘morality’, ‘economics’, and ‘technology’ as neutralizing powers, but also the development of a hermeneutics that is neutral with regard to theology: the de-theologizing of juristic hermeneutics (putting it also under the motto of the principle of Albericus Gentilis cited by C. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde* (Cologne/Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1950), 96: “Silete theologi in munere alieno”), the de-sacralization of the Bible, which turns it into a piece of literature, and in general the genesis of the neutral — that is, the literary — reader. Perhaps this neutralization, as the modern fate of hermeneutics, is possible only under the protection of the modern neutralization of the state and — I am using points of view developed in a conversation on this subject with B. Willms — the formation of the literary “author” only under the protection of the neutral state’s *auctoritas*.

absolute understanding of the text in favor of what is uncontroversial, or controversial without consequences, in the understanding of the text. In this connection the history of the origin of literary hermeneutics is traversed by two fundamentally different positions. Spinoza, in the *Tractatus*, makes *knowledge of nature* the final authority in the interpretation of Scripture: from which it follows — at the latest, when knowledge of nature becomes exact natural science — that hermeneutics is presumed to be superfluous.³⁵ The approach initiated by Romanticism turns against this: Schleiermacher — understanding the Bible as literature among other literature³⁶ — discovers as the fundamental situation of pluralizing or literary hermeneutics the conversational sociability of the *endless discussion*, which allows everyone to have his say, without any time limit and without any compulsion to reach agreement: differently, then, than in the so-called “dominance-free discourse”, which of course makes everyone a servant of the pressure for consensus, that is, in practice, a servant of whoever administers the pressure for consensus.³⁷ *Originalitas, non veritas, facit interpretationem.* [[Originality, not truth,

³⁵ In my opinion, B. Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670) carries out the “turning toward the historical”, which H.-G. Gadamer ascribes to him (in his article, “Hermeneutik”, cited in n. 30), only in an instrumental way; for it mainly serves to turn potentially deadly points of contention in the interpretation of Scripture into matters of indifference (that is, to defuse them) within the framework of a program of demythologization that makes rational “knowledge of nature” the standard for the understanding of the Bible. The result — where nature is ‘disenchanted’ out of the pantheistic equation with God into the object world that can be experimented with and mathematized, and knowledge of nature becomes the exact knowledge of natural science — is that the understanding of Scripture and the interpretation of texts become, supposedly, superfluous, because first practical reason (see the “Philosophical Principles of the Interpretation of Scripture, for the Settlement of the Conflict” between the philosophical and the theological faculties, in, I. Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), Akademie ed., vol. 8, 38ff) and then exact nature finally no longer explain Scripture and texts, but rather replace them: the sanctification of hermeneutics, begun in Spinoza's manner, finally — following the logic of its later path into exactitude — sanctifies it out of existence.

³⁶ The opening up, in this connection, of the range of what is worthy of interpretation by hermeneutics is strikingly documented by the texts assembled by H.-G. Gadamer and G. Boehm in *Seminar: Philosophische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976): at first what is interesting for hermeneutics — from Flavius through Rambach to S. J. Baumgarten — is only, or primarily, the Bible, then also the classical poets (F. A. Wolf) and classical philosophers (F. Ast), then — in a direction suggested by the dialogue — the whole of literature, in other words, all texts (this position being represented by Schleiermacher, who even poses the question “whether such authors as those who write for newspapers and those who draw up the various advertisements in them are subjects for the art of interpretation” [136]), then all “expressions of life” (Dilthey) and there, in exemplary fashion, that of the “care”-world of what is “ready to hand” (Heidegger), and finally everything linguistic (Gadamer). This process of the increasing ‘universality’ of hermeneutics should not be understood by means of the concept of linear progress that the hermeneuticists elsewhere attack, but in a different way, as the attempt to disarm the absolute text, the Bible — which is so explosive as to endanger life — by incorporating it, through assimilation, into a circle of interpretanda that is drawn more and more widely, making the Bible a relative text. It should be understood as a reply to the trauma — reactualized by the French Revolution — of hermeneutic civil war over the absolute text.

³⁷ On the distinction between “discourses” and “endless discussions” see my contribution to W. Oelmüller (Ed.), *Normenbegründung — Normendurchsetzung*, Materialien zur Normendiskussion 2 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1978), 230f.

makes something an interpretation.]]^{vi} For the rest, because hermeneutics becomes literary hermeneutics, because it is pressed by the fear of violent death, its key concept becomes non-death, or *life*: the talking and letting-talk of the endless discussion (which includes reading and letting-read) serves living and letting-live. It seems to me just as attractive as it is called for, now, to reconstruct the concept of life in the hermeneutics associated with Dilthey's 'philosophy of life'³⁸ in terms of this formulation, and also to find the tendency that is defined by this formulation in Gadamer's approach that takes play as its point of departure,³⁹ an approach that defines man as Being towards the text, towards the literary text, which (as Jauß's version of the theory of reception has urged) can always be read in yet another way and can also always have yet another meaning, because it has no 'meaning in itself', but rather — through delight in the context — is capable of endless interpretation.⁴⁰ So this — literary — text now becomes the paradigm of hermeneutics; *literary hermeneutics* — by transforming the absolute text into the literary text, and the absolute reader into the aesthetic reader — *is given precedence*, as a reply to the hermeneutic civil war over the absolute text.

6. Its Apparent Obsolescence

I consider the predominance of literary hermeneutics to be something we cannot relinquish: but that opinion — by Zeus! — nowadays is not in step with the times.

³⁸ See W. Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften* (1910), *Gesammelte Schriften* (6th ed., Göttingen/Stuttgart: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht/Teubner, 1973), vol. 7, p. 217: "The skillful interpretation of expressions of life which are fixed in lasting form we call 'interpretation'.... And the science of this art is hermeneutics"; as well as 131: "The essence of what dawns on us in experiencing and understanding is life."

³⁹ H.-G. Gadamer, *WuM*, esp. 97ff, or *TM*, 90ff. I understand this as a corrective against Heidegger's re-'commitment' (*engagement*) of hermeneutics by tying it into everyday/practical "care" and existentiell/existential "resoluteness", by which Heidegger risks the loss of its capacity for neutralization and of its potential for distancing and unburdening, so that it is precisely with Heidegger — contrary to his fundamental intention — that the ideological hermeneutics can link up.

⁴⁰ Part of this can be the salutary superficialization of questions of truth and salvation. That can include the position of irony in the sense proposed by Thomas Mann, "Ironie und Radikalismus", in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918; Frankfurt: Fischer, 1956), 560: "*Fiat justitia or libertas, fiat spiritus — pereat mundus et vital!*" Thus speaks all radicalism. "Is the truth an argument — when it is a question of life?" This is the formula of irony." It is, it seems to me, the formula of literary hermeneutics, the formula by which it directs us to aesthetic matters. That touches on the problem of "application". One of the most important things, in connection with application, can be not to let it happen immediately. Where, for example, application, as judgment, means condemnation, it can be vitally important to delay it: to make it dilatory, of little or even of no effect. That is the basic character of aesthetic application: as a reply to the civil war over the absolute text, hermeneutics neutralizes absolute texts, turning them into interpretable ones — into texts that can always be read in a different way and can always mean something different, and are therefore open to interpretation — and neutralizes absolute readers, turning them into aesthetic ones.

For at present a *discomfort with the precedence of literary hermeneutics*⁴¹ prevails everywhere, and in fact (I think) *because* — since the modern world's increasing speed of change increases its forgetfulness — *the question is forgotten to which this rise of literary hermeneutics was the answer*: the danger of hermeneutic civil war. Consequently — that is, because the Thirty Years' War seems very far away and the French Revolution at least far enough away that the Terror begins to be a problem that one can skip over — consequently literary hermeneutics and its primacy today seem obsolete, as perhaps a relic of the notion of the 'educated middle classes'. Once, following the sly thesis of, among others, Lutz Geldsetzer,⁴² the Reformation became academically successful through the hankering of the theological faculty to become the philological one. Today the reverse hankering is at work. The philologists would like to be theologians, with all the trimmings: holy writings, ecclesiastical office of instruction, orthodoxy and heresy, index, banning, excommunication, and also, as far as possible, with a devil, whether he is now called capitalism or something else. The study of literature wants to return from the literary and disengaged position back to the position of involvement, from pluralizing hermeneutics back to absolute, singularizing, hermeneutics.

Of course today one can no longer employ the existing theologies of Christianity for this tendency to return to theology, for they have both — and I emphasize: both (being philologically educated and enlightened with regard to literature) — long since passed through the Reformation and have both long since assimilated the reply to its consequences of conflict as well: both of them. A theology that today is still pre-Reformation in character must be sought elsewhere. And one finds it, in the modern *philosophy of history*, which, strictly speaking, is not a secularized theology,⁴³ but rather the only theology in regard to which secularization, so far, has failed. In it, singu-

⁴¹ Even H.-G. Gadmaer calls, in connection with it, for a "rediscovery of the fundamental hermeneutic problem" (WuM, 290ff, or TM, 274ff) through an effort to "redefine the hermeneutics of the cultural sciences in terms of legal and theological hermeneutics" (WuM, 294, or TM, 277); but, however fruitful this may be in a moderate form, in a case of excess it could lead again to a situation in which, with the return to a potentially deadly dogmatism of truth as a result of taking our orientation from the 'dogmatic' faculties, the question of how we can live with the truth again becomes unanswerable. Of course that is something that does not so much need to be asserted in relation to Gadamer, but far more in relation, for example, to J. Habermas, "Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik", in, R. Bubner, K. Cramer, and R. Wiehl (Eds.), *Hermeneutik und Dialektik* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1970), 73-103.

⁴² L. Geldsetzer, "Traditionelle Institutionen Philosophischer Lehre und Forschung", in, H. M. Baumgartner, O. Höffe, C. Wild (Eds.), *Philosophie — Gesellschaft — Planung, Colloquium, H. Krings zum Geburtstag* (2nd ed.; Munich: Bayerisches Staatsinstitut für Hochschulplanung, 1976), esp. p. 32.

⁴³ K. Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), or *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1953).

larized hermeneutics rules, the reason being that the philosophy of history, following Koselleck's familiar thesis,⁴⁴ arose as a result of singularization: because in all the many stories it allowed validity to only one single story, "history";^{vii} the concept of which it invented somewhere around 1750, and which it defined as the intra-worldly history of redemption through emancipation. This philosophy of history needs singularizing hermeneutics in order — repressing the polymythical multiplicity of the many stories and demanding the monomythical simplicity of the one history — once again to discover and to promote, in all "dealings" and actions and thoughts and texts, the one absolute history. In this way — that is, by depluralizing and de-literarizing hermeneutics — it makes hermeneutics a matter of creed again and thus — this is the point — again makes it able and eager to get into a situation that it seemed to have behind it: into hermeneutic civil war.⁴⁵ The *revolutionary* philosophy of history then does not act towards the danger of that civil war in a manner that seeks to avoid it; on the contrary, one must — that is (frequently unconsciously) its answer — *not avoid* the civil war, *but win* it, as a revolution. Of course, in order to be able to win it, one must have it; and when one has it, one must go through with it, in bloody and deadly fashion, perhaps again for entire generations: and is it worth this? Does it produce anything at all desirable? There one has, I think, to consider at least three things: the doubtfulness of actual victory; that which comes before the victory; and that which comes after the victory. The prognosis on all three points is, in my opinion, always bleak. For the rest, one should not — as those people do, most innocently, who present themselves as world champions of suspicion — one should not depend upon one's own harmlessness, unless this (precisely in the removal of the consequences of thought from one's sphere of concern) is institutionalized with sufficient security.

I think, then, that in view of the perennial danger of neo-religious hermeneutic civil war, it is not the singularizing hermeneutics of the philosophy of history but the pluralizing procedure of literary hermeneutics — which I dare say covers historiography as well — that is called for and, as I said, is not something that we can relinquish. It is the answer that lives and lets live by reading and letting read. Taken by itself it is certainly not sufficient in this regard, but it is necessary — which was all that was at issue here. This literary hermeneutics, as a pluralizing hermeneutics, operates with liberalism's technique of the *separation of powers*, in accordance with which the individual —

⁴⁴ R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft* (cited in n. 22), esp. pp. 47ff.

⁴⁵ Compare the analysis of the fundamental pattern in R. Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise. Ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (1959, 2nd ed.; Freiburg/Munich: Alber, 1969), esp. 7f and 155-57.

while no doubt he cannot, using Adorno's formula, "be different *without* fear" — can at any rate be different with *reduced* fear, ultimately — *divide et fuge!*^{viii} — by separating the powers of texts and interpretations as well, that is, by dividing even the authorities that stories⁴⁶ are, and separating even the powers that texts are.

7. Hermeneuticists and Code-Breakers

One who wants to clarify hermeneutics *hermeneutically* must pose the question of the question, or of the questions, to which hermeneutics is the answer; and he must attempt to answer it, in the way that I have attempted (partially) to answer it here, or in a different way, or still another way, or yet again another way. In this use of the question/answer schema — *nota bene* — the question in each case (and also the question to which hermeneutics is the answer) is the condition of the possibility of the answer and of its intelligibility, so that the hermeneutic question of what this question is is something to which the transcendental philosophers think they have the exclusive right, namely, a question about "the conditions of the possibility" of something. In hermeneutics, these conditions are *historicized*; hermeneutics *makes the transcendental point of view into the historical one*.⁴⁷ Of course, there is still the question whether in reality one *must* proceed hermeneutically in order to understand, and to conceptualize, what understanding and interpreting are.

That is at least not self-evident. There is at present again an alternative to the hermeneutic approach, one which in conclusion I would like to take up briefly here — in particular because hermeneutics, it turns out, is also the answer to it. This alternative is *code-breaking*; it has been on the advance — also and especially as a theory of understanding — under various scientific names (as communication theory, as semiotics, and so forth) for some time. The question of understanding is then — as perceived by the "sender" and by the "receiver" — that of the code that is being used. Today the analysis of the conceptual history of the basic unit of vocabulary in the human sciences that are no longer diachronic is, in general, a hermeneutic desideratum: why, for example, in this approach does the decisive concept of possibility ("competence") come from the realm of words associated with rivalry,⁴⁸ and the decisive concept of actualiza-

⁴⁶ Compare my "Lob des Polytheismus. Über Monomythie und Polymythie", in, H. Poser (Ed.), *Philosophie und Mythos* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1979), 40-58, and in my collection, *Abschied vom Prinzipiellen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 91-116.

⁴⁷ Compare J. G. Fichte, *System der Sittenlehre nach den Prinzipien der Wissenschaft* (1798), sec. 31.

tion ("performance") from the realm of images associated with the theater? In regard to the "code" concept I suspect — a suspicion that is subject to refutation — that although "code" (as *codex*: for example in the "*Code Napoléon*") had long since changed from a word designating manuscripts and books to one referring to a list or a summing-up of rules, it probably only became a prominent fundamental term (by way of linguistics) beginning with the moment at which, following the invention of the radio (Marconi, 1897), the decoding of encoded radio messages (and the encoding of one's own) became, to a significant extent, the task of military experts in secret languages: "*code begins its career in linguistics as a word associated with espionage*". From this time onwards — on a grand scale since, at the latest, the First World War — the expert in decoding and encoding can become the key member of the group of linguistic scientists (a group who in times of war are not uncommonly engaged in this kind of activity) and "code" can increasingly become the key term of linguistics and then also of the study of literature and of society. But that means that *with the increasing popularity of the code concept the perspective of the decoder becomes the characteristic perspective of the human sciences*: the perspective of one who is confronted with language as 'secret language,' as the language that I do *not* speak, do *not* understand (in contrast to the mother tongue and to the languages that are usually acquired in school, languages that, in general, I *already* speak and understand). Under the pressure, too, of the increasing demands made by ethnology — and of the special problem of decoding dead systems of hieroglyphic writing — the relationship to the language that is *not* understood, to the text that is *not* understood, to the "*fait social*" ("social fact") that is *not* understood, becomes exemplary for linguistics and for the studies of literature and society. Adorno⁴⁹ strikingly contrasted Max Weber's sociology based upon "understanding" ("*verstehende Soziologie*") with Emile Durkheim's sociology of "*faits sociaux*", and interpreted the Durkheimian sociology as the sociology of a world that has become unintelligible: it is significant that the father of modern linguistics, Saussure, took his orientation from Durkheim.

However: as a rule, while it is never the case that we understand everything, neither is it the case that we understand nothing at all.

⁴⁸ *Competentia* was the status of the *competentes*: in ancient Rome, of the candidates for the office of Consul, later of candidates to be the Pope and of other aspirants (for example to baptism), as long as they were not yet (or in the end didn't become) what they were candidates for. "Competent...is the term for one who, together with others, sues for something": J. H. Zedler, *Großes vollständiges Universallexikon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Halle/Leipzig, 1732 and subsequent eds.).

⁴⁹ T. W. Adorno, "Gesellschaft", in, H. Kunst and S. Grundmann, eds., *Evangelisches Staatslexikon* (Stuttgart/Berlin: Kreuz Verlag, 1966), 636-42, esp. 638.

We only understand what we already understand.⁵⁰ Therefore, in my opinion, the code-breaking theory of understanding (in other words, the non-hermeneutic theory) betakes itself methodically and artificially out of the (phenomenologically privileged) situation in which we exist in our daily life-world — that is to say, out of the situation of the *always* or (as the case may be) *in each case already* (somehow) understood or pre-understood language, world of texts, or social world. But this language or world is precisely what hermeneutics takes as its point of departure. The code-breakers start from a fundamentally foreign, non-understood world, while the hermeneuticists start from a fundamentally familiar, already understood world: *therefore the authority to which hermeneutics appeals is not a "code", but history.* There are advantages to this. It is easier to hold fast to diachronic problems, which the code-breakers have mostly not left behind but only banished into problem-exile. Thus, for example, today's etymology is studied, in the form of the history of concepts, by non-linguistic hermeneuticists, that is, by philosophers and historians.⁵¹ I don't know whether the linguists, who formerly were responsible for this subject and who in ten years at most will yearn to have the assignment back, will get it back then (unless they wisely never gave it up at all). *Hermeneutics, then, is an answer to code-breaking, in that, in compensatory fashion, it preserves the problems that code-breaking represses* — including the problem of the *hermeneutic* clarification of hermeneutics. Thus its advantage lies not only in the fact that it links up with the phenomenologically privileged life-world situation, in which we always find ourselves already understanding things, but also in the fact that, because it can appeal to the wealth of understanding contained in pre-given understandings (to the 'pre-interpretedness' of the world), it preserves problems. Hermeneutics is able to do this because it is closer to the concrete, the interesting, the gripping — the dateable — questions. To put it in terms of the image of mountain climbing, while hermeneutics al-

⁵⁰ W. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* (cited in n. 38), vol. 7, 225: "Interpretation would be impossible if expressions of life were entirely foreign. It would be unnecessary if there was nothing foreign in them. So it lies between these two extreme poles." This is the source of the inevitability of the so-called "circle in understanding" or "hermeneutic circle": see M. Heidegger, *SuZ*, esp. 152f, or *BT*, 193ff, and H.-G. Gadamer, *WuM*, esp. 250ff, or *TM*, 235ff. On the early history of this "task circle" see F. Rodi, "'Erkenntnis des Erkannten' — August Boeckhs Grundformel der hermeneutischen Wissenschaften", in, H. Flashar, K. Gründer, and A. Horstmann, (Eds.), *Philologie und Hermeneutik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 68-83. Heidegger's principle always holds (*SuZ*, 153; *BT*, 195), that "What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way".

⁵¹ For example: O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck (Eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1972-); J. Ritter and K. Gründer (Eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1971-); E. Rothacker and (subsequently) K. Gründer (Eds.), *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* (beginning in 1955).

ways already has its base-camp of pre-understandings close beneath the ridge crest of concrete problems of understanding — thanks to history, which brought the camp to that point — code-breaking sciences must constantly begin at the bottoms of the valleys at the foot of the problem-mountain, at zero or even at a negative level. While the code-breaking science does then (placing high demands on means of financing) unflinchingly traverse the stretches on which one needs much apparatus, many Sherpas and many scientific assistants, the question is still whether it actually and often reaches the problem-slopes on which the hermeneuticists are always almost immediately — mostly without the oxygen-mask of research subsidy — on their way, in small roped parties or alone.

I conclude my discussion with the following: the poor hermeneuticists — I hear others besides code-breakers say — never get out of history. But *must* one then get beyond history? He who does not get out of history, does not arrive at an absolute position. But *must* one then arrive at an absolute position? He who wants to be a philosopher without an absolute position commits unspeakable fallacies. 'I like fallacy'ⁱ But he who says that will come to a bad end or even end — laden with contradictions — as a skeptic. This well-intentioned warning is unlucky: the skeptic that I am not supposed to become, I already am; and for that very reason — since skepticism is not successful when one advocates no thesis at all, but rather (as a separation even of the powers that convictions are) when, at any given time, one advocates too many theses — for that very reason I have advocated here the theses that I have advocated, which also include the opinion expressed at the beginning, that the core of hermeneutics is skepticism and the important form of skepticism today is hermeneutics.

TRANSLATION NOTES

ⁱ "Lesen und Lesenlassen!" — a pun on "Leben und Lebenlassen!" — "Live and let live."

ⁱⁱ "*Naberwartung*", the term used for the vivid expectation of the impending end of the world or Second Coming of Christ.

ⁱⁱⁱ Compare the eleventh of Marx's Theses on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."

^{iv} "*Eigentlich*": really, authentically, properly; Heidegger's term.

^v "*Antiprinzipielles Prinzip*": suggesting that this law of inertia is not a "matter of principle", as intentional changes might be. Note that the collection of the author's papers in which this one was republished is entitled, appropriately, *Farewell to Matters of Principle*.

^{vi} A variant of the much-quoted Hobbesian principle, *Auctoritas, non veritas, facit legem*. (Authority, not truth, makes something a law.)

vii In German, “story” and “history” are one word: *Geschichte*, so the transition from stories (*Geschichten*) to history (*die Geschichte*) requires only the addition of the definite article.

viii “Divide and avoid!” — a variant of the famous *Divide et impera*: “Divide and rule.”

ix This sentence is in English in the original.

ANCIENT AND MODERN ETHICS*

Ernst Tugendhat

Translated by Martin Livingston

Only incidentally are birthdays indications of time. They offer the opportunity of wishing happiness to somebody esteemed or loved, if he is young, or, if he is older, of congratulating him on his *eudaimonia* (happiness). If it is philosophers who are together on such a day, they naturally tend to *talk about* what others simply do. And so I, too, would like to take up the old, but also neglected question: what is this happiness or *eudaimonia*.

To pursue this question on the birthday of a philosopher gives one — gives me — the chance to take off the usual objectivistic mask of philosophical discourse, behind which we pretend to speak as somebody in general to somebody in general about some topic as such. Let me take advantage of the chance to place myself explicitly back into the first person, that is, to raise the question as it presents itself to me from the perspective in which I happen to find myself at the moment, and also to do so in the second person, that is to say, in a dialogue with Hans-Georg Gadamer.

Every philosophical dialogue, insofar as its point is to improve one's own view of a matter by trying to understand what the other has to say, is hermeneutics in Gadamer's sense of the word. A philosophical dialogue, which as such is then always hermeneutical, will, however, if it is to be a conversation with Gadamer in particular, also have to understand its topic hermeneutically, and that is now to say, historically. Until now I have not been used to approaching philosophical questions from a hermeneutical angle. I believe, however, to have come to a point where the limits of my previous non-historical method are becoming evident and I recognize my need for dialogue with the hermeneutical philosopher, which in turn refers me to dialogue with history. The question about the necessity of modern

* Translated from *Antike und moderne Ethik*, in *Die antike Philosophie in ihrer Bedeutung für die Gegenwart*, Kolloquium zu Ehren des 80. Geburtstages von Hans-Georg Gadamer, edited by Reiner Wiehl (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1981), pp. 55-73.

ethics' coming to terms with the ethics of antiquity which I want to present here for discussion is *one* example which has made this clear to me. Before I enter upon this hermeneutical topic, an understanding must be reached about what it is that hermeneutics has to say in philosophy. Or, to formulate it again in the perspective of the second person, if one wants to discuss a philosophical question with Gadamer, one has to see not only that question in the hermeneutical dimension, but one will also have to discuss the very point of hermeneutics with him: what it is that one is doing or should be doing whenever a philosophical question is approached in the hermeneutical dimension.

I can handle this preliminary question only in a very summary fashion. I will simply state dogmatically what my notion approximately is in contrast to Gadamer's conception. You might ask whether such a dogmatic expression of opinion is not just the very opposite of the dialogue for which I am striving. Nevertheless, I will in any case first deliver a *makros logos* (long discourse), in which what is said can be kept open for the discussion following by simply being stated dogmatically (since it is thus designated as a mere subjective opinion), whereas to safeguard oneself by arguing and staging a fictitious dialogue in a lecture might serve precisely to shut oneself off from a real dialogue.

What I find unconvincing about Gadamer's conception of philosophical hermeneutics, now as before,¹⁽¹⁾ is his understanding of it according to the model of encountering works of art. This conception is a consequence of the fact that for Gadamer the initial hermeneutical situation is the encounter with the other, which of course is only to be productive when one simultaneously reflects upon oneself. In contrast, I take reflection upon oneself, upon one's own understanding, to be the initial situation, and retrogression into the historical dimension becoming necessary only out of this. This first difference could appear to be a mere shift of emphasis, but it involves a second difference which concerns the concept of truth. The truth of different works of art — granted that truth can be spoken of here at all — do not relativize each other. In contrast to this, it belongs to the very sense of propositional truth that different philosophical conceptions of something *do* relativize each other. I think one can only properly conceive a theory of philosophical hermeneutics when one succeeds in making this mutual relativization compatible with propositional truth, and that means, in giving it a sense

¹⁽¹⁾ [[Unbracketed footnote numbers are those given in the original article. Bracketed numbers not accompanied by unbracketed ones were added by the translator.]]

See my review of Gadamer, "The Fusion of Horizons", in the *Times Literary Supplement* 1978 (London: Times Newspapers, Ltd.), p. 565, where what is said in the next sentence is also treated more closely.

which is not relativistic. A total relativity of the kind that splinters the truth into a starry sky of possibilities, always allowing one to say that one can see it as A does and then again as B does as well, and so on, contradicts the respective claims of A, B, etc., to truth. It seems to me that Gadamer's view tends to lead to a relativism of this kind. There is another form of relativism which, although it likewise contradicts the truth claims of propositions, is quite remote from Gadamer's view. This is historical relativity, in the sense of saying that what A says appears to be true under the causal conditions x, y, z, and what B says under the conditions u, v, w. This second view would no longer be a hermeneutical one at all, but an explanatory one. As a result of this the truth claim of A, B, etc. would no longer be taken seriously, and Gadamer always insists upon this. One would no longer be speaking *with* A, B, etc., but *about* them in the third person. The significance of this explanatory, non-hermeneutical relativism seems to me to lie in its lending itself to integration into the perspective of the first person. For as soon as the person concerned becomes aware himself that his previous understanding of some matter was dependent upon certain conditions, he cannot rest content with realizing this as does the observer in the third person. He is oriented towards knowledge of his object, and so must form a new understanding of it free of the relativity of which he has been made aware. Thus the possibility of a progressive de-relativization emerges. This presupposes, though, that there is adherence to the absolute claim to truth. Only from the perspective of an absolute claim to truth does the insight into the relativity of a particular view or understanding lead not to relativism, but to de-relativization.

I can now set forth how I more or less envision a hermeneutical procedure in philosophy. The point of departure (the thesis, so to speak) is always the naive, pre-hermeneutical stance towards the object in the first person with its absolute claim to truth. Whatever is asserted in this perspective is called into question as soon as I become attentive to the relativity of my view, or also, whenever I encounter a different view of the same object. That is, so to speak, the antithesis. The synthesis arises out of a new, unified understanding of the object, into which the other view has been integrated. This allows for the two borderline cases in which one believes oneself able to recognize that the other, or also one's own, understanding is simply false or else is already encompassed by the other view. The more normal case is that one must develop a third view, in relation to which one's own original view, as well as the one encountered in a hermeneutical experience, is shown to be one-sided. The conception which I am advocating might appear to be a Hegelianization of hermeneutics. As I see it, however, the hermeneutical process proceeds one step at a time; no hermeneutical experience can be anticipated

beforehand. Moreover, the point of departure always remains one's own contingency. What I would like to insist upon with respect to Gadamer is only that the hermeneutical experience must start out from pre-hermeneutical, naive experience. Only insofar as the absolute claim of the naive experience to truth is maintained can, I believe, relativism be avoided.

With these preliminary remarks I have only wanted to clarify the perspective from which I would like to approach a hermeneutical problem like the one of ancient and modern ethics. It is first of all quite clear from what has just been said that the title should have read "Modern and Ancient Ethics". The point of departure is the naive stance towards the matter within our own modern tradition. I cannot somehow place myself, like the historian, above both traditions to compare them, for there is no third vantage for one who philosophizes. Standing in the modern tradition, I encounter another one, that of antiquity. The ancient tradition is not simply a foreign tradition, but one from which the modern tradition has consciously moved away. First, then, I will have to rescrutinize the reasons justifying this step. If they are convincing, it then follows that despite whatever the ancient tradition might contain which points beyond the modern one and shows it to be one-sided, we cannot simply resort back to the ancient tradition. We can only evaluate what we find there as the indication of a problem which has remained open for us and which we now cannot approach anew in any other way than on our own ground and with our own standards of justification. These are of course additional strong and subjective opinions, for which I will not argue sufficiently, just as I will not do so for what follows. What I am striving for in what I say is not that you consider it true, but that you at least consider it significant and therefore worth discussing.

Of course the question arises whether the all-encompassing titles "ancient ethics" and "modern ethics" are capable of demarcating anything identifiable at all. This question I will skirt by staking out a spot in each of the two fields of ancient and modern ethics, namely Aristotle and Kant, and proposing that the surrounding field is meant as well. I will leave open the question of just how far the surrounding field extends. Of course such a decision to select Kant from among others as the point of departure is only possible if my own naive self-understanding, from which I finally do have to take my departure, stands in the Kantian tradition. To make plausible the further-reaching implication that Kantian ethics can be considered representative of modern ethics, I would only like to offer the following remarks. It seems to me that the only modern ethical tradition independent of the Kantian one is utilitarianism. At that point in the confrontation with ancient ethics which is of most concern to

me, Kant and utilitarianism sit in the same boat. The other ethical traditions developed in modern times, such as Hegelian ethics or material value ethics, are for their part reactions to Kantian ethics, which have nevertheless surrendered the standard of justification which had been attained by Kant and which, in my opinion, must not be given up. I will come back to this later. In their reaction to Kant, these ethical traditions have also resorted to particular interpretations of antiquity so that including them in the present context would create excessive complications. The other decision, to use Aristotle as a paradigm for orientation in ancient ethics, is certainly less problematic; yet it remains inconsequential anyway for the train of thought which follows. Insofar as you do not agree with this decision, simply replace all the talk about "ancient ethics" with "Aristotelian ethics".

Inasmuch as we consider ethical questions from the perspective of Kant, to what extent can the encounter with Aristotle draw our attention to a shortcoming in our own position? At this point I would once again like to place myself back into direct dialogue with Gadamer. For we find a confrontation of Aristotelian with Kantian ethics also in Gadamer's writings, especially in his lecture of Walberberg from 1961, "Über die Möglichkeit einer Philosophischen Ethik".⁽²⁾ Here as elsewhere in his works, the distinctively characteristic Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* (moral discernment) stands in the forefront for Gadamer (see also *Wahrheit und Methode*, 295ff).⁽³⁾ Whereas in Kant's "ethics of principles" it appears as if what is right in each situation could be derived from the general moral principle, Aristotle has a concept of moral knowledge according to which whatever is right in a given instance is to be recognized intuitively in the situation by the person who is of the right disposition, and that means, who is oriented towards the principle. In keeping with his understanding of hermeneutics Gadamer contrasts the Aristotelian position with the Kantian one in an all-encompassing manner. If philosophical conceptions are like works of art, then indeed it must appear impermissible to carry out transplantations between them. If, however, what we are concerned with is truth, one would have to be able to convince even the Kantian of the greater appropriateness of the Aristotelian conception in this one respect. This would mean either to induce him to give up his position or to show him that when one starts out from a principle of impartiality such as the categorical imperative, the Aristotelian problem of application comes up

(2) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Kleine Schriften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 179-91, hereafter referred to as KS I.

(3) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960), pp. 295ff; or *Truth and Method* (N. Y.: Garrett Barden and John Cumming, 1975), pp. 278ff. (Crossroad published a paperback edition in 1981 with the same pagination.)

more than ever. One could try to show that whatever is impartial in a given instance cannot simply be derived from the principle but demands a situational, non-deductive power of judgment. With this I would merely like to indicate the direction which I would take to integrate into the Kantian position the idea of *phronesis* (moral discernment) shown so convincingly by Gadamer to be of importance.

In the Walberberg lecture this first point in the Kant-Aristotle comparison is connected with a second one. As is well known, according to Aristotle the ability to make correct concrete moral judgments — to exercise *phronesis* — is not an independent intellectual capacity, but is dependent upon the appropriate emotional disposition of a person, which in turn refers back to a proper upbringing. Gadamer describes this connection as one “between the subjectivity of knowing and the substantiality of being” (187)⁽⁴⁾ and he also speaks of the “supportive substantiality of *Recht und Sitte* (law and mores)” (186)⁽⁵⁾ If this vague hint to the Hegelian critique of Kant is carried a little further, the following evaluation of the difference between Kant and Aristotle emerges. Kant is wrong to insist so exclusively on the question of being able to justify what is practically correct, for what is practically correct can only be known when one goes back to what is given in law and mores; and that is just what Aristotle meant. I do not believe that I have presented Gadamer’s conception precisely, and perhaps I have only set up a straw man for myself. Yet I need it at this point to be better able to clarify what I think about it. Once again I want to content myself with a dogmatic contrast.

What I mean is the following. 1) Even though the ability to make moral judgments depends upon the proper emotional disposition and thus upon a proper upbringing, it does not follow from this that what a proper upbringing consists in cannot be justified. It does not therefore follow that morality has to refer back to mores which are traditionally given, and that means mores, the justifiability of which cannot be further questioned. 2) I find it unacceptable that one considers something right or good just because it is predetermined by mores, without being able to *show* it to be good or right. This would contradict not only a modern idea of philosophy, but also that which already from the time of Socrates has been called philosophy: radical justification. 3) One can indeed say that equilibrium, the criterion for what is morally right offered by Aristotle, remains so indefinite that it in fact acquires its definiteness from the mores which were traditionally given in his era. I think that a distinction must be made, however, between what Aristotle’s position actually

(4) KS I, p. 187.

(5) KS I, p. 186.

results in, one could say, behind his own back, and what it consists in according to his own intention. Aristotle himself never designated what is traditionally given as the determining standard. He did claim to justify morality, even if in a way which in the final analysis could not hold up. 4) The modern age differs from antiquity in the radicalization of the standards for justifying practical as well as theoretical judgments. For Kant it may no longer remain open how a class of judgments is to be justified. Empirical justification is differentiated from, on the one hand, *a priori* justification in a narrow, warranted sense, and, on the other hand, from metaphysical justification, which is unwarranted and for which no objective, generally valid criteria can be given. Some details of this distinction may need to be revised. The radicalization of the idea of justification is, however, a progressive step, towards autonomy and accountability aimed at ever since Socrates.

I would therefore like to separate the two points which seem to merge in Gadamer's comparison of Aristotle and Kant. In doing so, I differ from Gadamer with respect to the second point, above all in its evaluation. We cannot fall back behind the modern claims to justification. I of course also see a connection between the second and the first point, but I would describe it differently. A moral statement does not say what we want, but what we ought to do, and hence cannot be empirical. For otherwise it would be a theoretical statement, not an "ought"-statement, and we would be caught up in the naturalistic fallacy. A moral statement therefore can only refer back either to a decision, and so cannot be justified at all, or it must be possible to justify it *a priori*. Here of course only a formal, not a metaphysical, *a priori* can be considered. It was therefore the radicalized claim to justification which led Kant to his formal *a priori* moral principle. The simplest way to carry through this idea was to conceive not only the principle itself as valid *a priori*, but also the concrete norms generated from it as forming an *a priori* corpus, which could be established once and for all. It was as a consequence of this last step that it was not left to a situational judgment to decide what is right in each concrete case.

What Gadamer thus establishes in his first point as Kant's weakness in comparison with Aristotle is, according to my presentation of the second point as well, a consequence, but not a necessary consequence of this second point. This second point embodies in my view Kant's strength in comparison with Aristotle and appears unrelinquishable. But then the task arises that the insight of Aristotle into the situational character of moral judgment, once again made pertinent for us by Gadamer, be thought through anew *on* the level of the radicalized Kantian claim to justification and be integrated into the Kantian moral conception. In my opinion the question must be

stated thus: if the concrete moral judgments are not, as Kant thought, to be simply derived from the moral principle, if they are not in turn to be justified *a priori*, what is it then, in addition to the principle, upon which they are based? Here there seem to be two possibilities which do not mutually exclude one another. One is that the concrete moral judgment cannot be conclusively justified at all, that it contains a decisionistic remainder. Someone making a moral judgment certainly strives for impartiality, but cannot justify the concrete result of his situational judgment. The second possibility would involve showing whether and how empirical knowledge also goes into the justification of the situational judgment along with the *a priori* principle. We would thus have to clarify the structure of this specifically moral experience and justification. One might think that to concede a decisionistic component contradicts the radicalized claim to justification. But this would be a misunderstanding. The radicalized claim to justification merely demands that the status of the justification not be left indefinite. The conception that a judgment is not at all or only partially justifiable is a legitimate borderline case. Decisionism rests just as much on the foundation of autonomy as does rationalism.

I have only wanted here to indicate the direction in which I think the modern moral philosopher who has gone through Kant would have to try to assimilate Aristotle's idea of *phronesis* (moral discernment). With this I wished only to prepare the methodological perspective from which I would now like to enter upon another aspect of not only Aristotelian but of all ancient moral philosophy which is conducive to making us aware of another deficiency of modern ethics. It concerns the question about the object of ethics. It is well-known that the same term, "the good", refers to different topics in ancient and in modern ethics. The ancient question about *agathon*, the *bonum* (the good) concerned that which is good for each individual: his well-being, that in which his will can truly fulfill itself, *eudaimonia* (happiness). The object of Kantian or also of utilitarian ethics concerns rather the intersubjective norms. The question of ancient ethics was, What is it that I truly want for myself? Modern ethics asks, What is it that I ought to do with respect to others? Of course this does not mean that the Greeks were unaware of this topic of modern ethics. However, they had another designation for it, not *to agathon* (the good), but rather *to kalon* (the decent). This moral topic concerning the *kalon* certainly occurs in ancient ethics too, but in such a way that it is integrated into the question about true happiness. It is well-known how this came about. The thrust of the sophistic enlightenment was directed towards unmasking the traditional morality as heteronomous and replacing it with autonomous activity aimed at self-interest. Plato

started out from the same assumption insofar as for him, too, what is traditionally *pregiven* cannot, as such, make any justified claim to be followed. Also for Plato, autonomous action can be understood only in such a way that it is oriented towards properly understood self-interest. And now his well-known claim, which remained decisive for all of ancient ethics, was that it is the *kalon* (the decent) which is the true *agathon* (the true good) — that we therefore attain our own properly understood self-interest only when we act morally. This was a claim for which a sharp distinction was naturally required between apparent and properly understood self-interest, between apparent and true happiness. Yet it was not only the moral problem, but first of all the obvious fact that we can be uncertain about what we really want and can ask others for advice which made it clear that one had to distinguish between — as Aristotle says — the *phainomenon bouleton* (what is seemingly willed) and the *bouleton alethes* (what is truly willed), between that in which the will is *de facto* fulfilled and that in which it is genuinely fulfilled. This seemed to require a standard independent of our factual wants. Here a conception of psychological health suggested itself, along with the concepts of *telos* (proper end) and *ergon* (function), hence — as we can perhaps translate it for ourselves — the idea of a perfect self-development. And so the claim was that only someone who has attained this, only the psychologically healthy person, can be truly happy.

Ethics in the ancient sense therefore refers primarily to the question about true happiness, and yet includes secondarily the moral problem. In contrast, modern ethics, if we are to use Kant and utilitarianism as our orientation points, is concerned not only primarily with morality and thus with what the Greeks called *to kalon kai to dikaion* (the decent and the just), it also does not even contain any longer the very question which was the primary one for the Greeks, the question about the *agathon* (the good), about true happiness. Why not? In Kant's case the reasons can be clearly understood. The question about true or real happiness can be approached from a more subjective side, when a certain state of feelings is conceived as the criterion of true happiness, or, it can be approached more objectively, as when a criterion is given which does not consist in a certain emotional state, but rather in a certain constitution of the person such as the complete self-development already alluded to. Both possibilities, the objective as well as the subjective one, are repudiated by Kant. He first rejects all recourse to a concept of perfection in ethics, since such concepts remain "empty and indefinite" and allow one merely to move "in a circle".⁽⁶⁾ Such concepts, he maintains, only introduce into the theo-

(6) Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. IV, ed. by the Königlische Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin:

retical view of man what has already been practically or normatively presupposed. Or, to pinpoint Kant's contention more clearly with respect to my problem, a descriptive conception of how to be properly human cannot dictate to the will that in which it alone can truly fulfill itself. That in which the will truly fulfills itself can only be shown in the fulfillment itself, in the corresponding state of feeling. Just as there is no legitimate transition from what is to what ought to be, so there is also no legitimate transition from what is to what is willed. Or, to give the same thing yet another expression, only happiness itself can decide about true happiness.

Thus we see ourselves referred back to the subjective variant, which, however, Kant likewise repudiated. Kant and Bentham agree that higher or truer joys cannot be distinguished from lower ones. Kant's decisive argument runs: whereas in morality there are objective, generally valid rules with respect to what we *ought* to do, there are no objective, generally valid rules of conduct for attaining happiness. What action is simply good, that is, morally good, can be objectively justified. In contrast, it is impossible to justify in any objective and universally valid way which action is good for me, that is, promotes my well-being. Thus a particular substantial conception of happiness cannot be justified. This appears plausible insofar as we either see ourselves referred to the subjective fact in which our willing and wishing fulfills itself, and that is then no objective justification, or we must resort to a standard independent of the subjective condition, and thereby make ourselves susceptible to Kant's criticism of the concept of perfection. It thus appears that the reason why in modern ethics the question about what one truly wills not only diminishes in importance in comparison with the question of what one ought to do, but indeed falls aside, is once again the radicalized standard of justification. Of course one must also not overlook the emancipatory political thrust of this conception, which lies in the fundamental conviction of the liberal conception of law that it ought to be left up to everyone to shape his own life. This is an "ought"-statement which can be directly derived from the categorical imperative. Of course, this prohibition of interference with the autonomy of individuals does not presuppose that there are no principles for the shaping of one's life capable of being objectively justified. But wherever one believes in such principles, the step to a moral dictatorship lies very close indeed.

Does this mean that we today can forgo that which was the basic question for the ancients? I do not think so. I do not want to present here in detail the fundamental argument arising from the issue

itself, namely, that we, as beings bestowed with the ability to reflect, cannot help asking the question about our genuine well-being, that we therefore always find ourselves caught up in the tension between *de facto* and true interests, between apparent and true happiness. Instead I would like to point out that the question about the morally good is in its very sense a higher ranking question which refers back to the question about what is good *for* someone. It does so in two respects.

First with respect to the content of the concept: the morally good is whatever stands in the impartial interest of everybody. (Kant's categorical imperative has this sense, too, in the last analysis.) This implies, however, that in order to recognize what is morally obligatory, we must know what stands in the interest of each and every person. In the end it is not a matter of the *de facto*, but rather of the properly understood interest of everybody. This may certainly not be anticipated in advance, since otherwise the autonomy of those concerned would be violated. There is however a moral interest in their trying to recognize what they truly want. This becomes more evident in the area of social morality, of justice, than in individual morality. Social justice means equal distribution, but the equal distribution of what? Since Kant I think we have experienced that formal equality before the law is not sufficient. In the meantime I think we have gained the additional experience that an economic equality or the equality of opportunity is not sufficient either, because it presupposes an economic definition of the individual's well-being. This minimal definition of well-being seemed to leave the shaping of one's life to the autonomy of the individual. In reality, this conception of justice implies a certain pre-decision of the shaping of the individual's life. Moreover, the shaping of the individual's life proves to be ever more dependent on and interwoven into the decisions of society which, in their turn, contain a claim to justice. This then means that justice can no longer be understood as an equality of economic opportunities, but rather must be understood more generally as an equality of opportunity for life and happiness. Yet this presupposes that its conception includes reflection on what happiness is. Of course I say "happiness" on purpose and do not use such expressions as "a life of human dignity", since they would immediately come up against the Kantian criticism of the concept of perfection. Difficult though it may be to ask the question about true happiness on the level of the claims to justification reached by Kant, nevertheless we today cannot look upon this question, as Kant still could, as if it were irrelevant for the question about the morally good. For the experience gained since Kant about the effect which his own moral concept, the fundamentals of which in my opinion ought not to be given up, has had upon the conception of social

justice has shown that the concretization of this moral concept must be not only situational, but also such that it sees itself referred back to the problem of happiness.

This also seems to force itself on us in a second respect, which concerns the *motivation* to act morally; however, that is the question, Why should one want to be moral? It was this question which the ancients believed they could answer only by resorting to the concept of true happiness. It seems to me that no other answer is, in principle, possible. It is well-known that Kant tried to conceive the rationality of the morally obligatory itself as a possible motive for action. This, however, he could think of only as referring back to a supersensible stratum of the personality, which thus fell apart into two strata. Whoever is unable to follow him in this will either have to renounce the thought of genuinely moral action or else have to hope that the answer to the question about true happiness will include morality. If one does not misunderstand the concept of happiness, one is even compelled to do so. It would be a misunderstanding to think that the striving for happiness consists in selfishness and hence that it is amoral from the outset. There is even a definition in Kant which says that "happiness is the condition of a rational being in the world, in whose whole existence everything goes according to wish and will".⁽⁷⁾ The will however is not necessarily bent on the welfare of one's own person, but rather the other way around: I am doing well when that on which my will is bent reaches fulfillment. No matter which formula we choose for morality — for instance, the Kantian one never to look upon anyone only as a means, but always at the same time as an end in itself — it follows that this, say, the well-being of others, if it is something I want for its own sake, is an element of my conception of happiness. I think this statement is compelling, but of course it is only an if-then statement which says that *if* someone acts in an autonomously moral way, then it is only because he wants to, and that means, because it forms part of his happiness. But then this is precisely the question, first, what our conception of happiness must consist in if it is to encompass morality, and second, whether *only* such a conception of happiness encompassing morality is a true one, that is to say, whether (a thought thoroughly ridiculed by Kant) we can only be really happy if — as the ancients maintained — we are moral.

Thus it is morality itself — and I mean the modern moral conception worked out by Kant — which, both with respect to the content of the morally obligatory and with respect to the motivation towards

(7) Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. V, ed. by the Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1913), p. 124; or Lewis White Beck, trans., *Critique of Practical Reason* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).

morality, makes it philosophically necessary to return to the ancient question about what is truly willed, about properly understood interests, about real happiness. But now I want to maintain that, just as with the problem of *phronesis* (moral discernment), we can resume the problem of *eudaimonia* (happiness) today only by facing it too on the level of modern methodological consciousness, and thus only by not falling back behind the standards of justification which have been attained. This does not imply any Neo-Cartesianism, as if one were only allowed to talk about what can be justified with certainty or else keep silent. It is not a matter of the certainty of the justification, but of clarity concerning the kind of possibility for justification.

So the question I wish to present to you is, How can one once again take up the problem of happiness on the level of the methodological consciousness of today? We should leave aside one aspect of this question which, though it is of great practical relevance and in its particulars not at all trivial, in its fundamentals is nevertheless unproblematical. I refer to the question about the best means of realizing a certain conception of happiness. My problem does not concern the possible errors in the means, but in the goals of our will. It concerns the question about what it may mean to delude oneself about one's own true interests and needs.

The distinction between true and false needs or interests is not unknown today, but, on the contrary, quite widespread. Nevertheless I have not yet found an author (this may of course be simply due to my not reading widely enough) who makes this distinction in full consciousness of the methodological difficulties and who gives a criterion for the truth of interests which will stand up to the Kantian criticism. Especially widespread is the discussion of false needs in social criticism, as, for example, in Marcuse's *Onedimensional Man*.⁽⁸⁾ Even though it may be plausible, even undeniable, that what we consider to be our interests is dependent upon the structures of society, it yet seems to me that by a sociological or social-philosophical approach one cannot arrive at a criterion for true interests. For how would one want to justify that true interests can be developed only in such and such a society, for instance, in a participational, non-hierarchical society? Evidently any such claim starts out from a certain view of man and, as in Aristotle's case, can base itself only on a certain conception of the right disposition of individuals — even though these be understood as essentially social beings. We see ourselves thrown back, therefore, from the sociological onto the psychological level. But then the question arises here as well — With what right can we select a particular psychological dispo-

(8) Herbert Marcuse, *Onedimensional Man* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).

sition as the proper or natural one? The question is whether there is a criterion for a person's doing well or badly which is independent of his *de facto* present and future well-being and which is not susceptible to the Kantian criticism of the concept of perfection.

Now there is obviously *one* dimension of human existence for which we have such an objective criterion, the dimension of bodily health and illness. For the statement "he is doing well" we have on the one hand subjective criteria which agree with the previously quoted Kantian definition of happiness: he is doing well when his situation corresponds to his wish and will. On the other hand, we are equally justified in using the statement in the same sense in which we would use it for plants: he is doing well when he is healthy. This objective criterion cannot be reduced to the subjective criterion, since a person can be ill without knowing it. Yet the reverse relation seems to me to hold true, that it would be irrational not to want to be healthy in the same way that it would be irrational to want to suffer from pain for no reason. I confess that I do not feel quite happy about this last remark. Here there still remains a gap. However, it seems plausible that in health we do have an objective criterion for well-being which is independent of the will and yet decisive for it from the will's own perspective. For this reason the Greeks were well justified in looking to the concept of health along with the concept of function, of *ergon* — since being ill means being impaired in one's ability to function — for the solution of the question of happiness.

The big question now becomes whether and how today we can still follow the Greeks in extending this concept of health or ability to function as pertaining to the mental disposition as well. Is talk about mental health and illness just a metaphor or can it be given a clear sense? This question has become especially urgent in the recent past because today there is a medical science dependent upon a concept of mental health, the science of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic literature about this question has become increasingly aware of the danger that every attempt to fix the content of what is to be understood as mental health could depend upon a particular normative idea, a particular view of man, which would immediately entangle us again in the circle pointed out by Kant in his criticism of the concept of perfection.

We therefore need a formal concept of psychological health. I can explain what I mean by once again referring to the Greek conception. Health for Greek medicine consisted in harmony, equilibrium, the right mixture of opposite bodily forces. Thus it seemed appealing to Plato and Aristotle to understand also the health of the soul as equilibrium. Can we start out again from here today? It has been tried. In an explicit resumption of the Aristotelian tradition

from a psychoanalytic point of view, Erich Fromm develops in his book, *Man for Himself*,⁽⁹⁾ a conception according to which psychological health consists — stated in a very summary manner — in the equilibrium between autonomy and dependence upon others. The modern orientation towards the subject-object relation or intersubjectivity enables Fromm (as also Hegel and Kierkegaard before him) to give a more definite sense to the concept of equilibrium or synthesis of opposites than Aristotle, in whose case the formula may easily appear empty. Even though I find Fromm's conception plausible, it, too, as it stands, is nevertheless susceptible to the Kantian criticism.² (10) As in the case of the Greeks, Fromm has failed to make a conceptual distinction. If one says that health — whether bodily or mental — consists in equilibrium, it remains unclear whether that is supposed to be a definition of health or whether the empirical statement is meant that health is *brought about* by an equilibrium of such and such a character. I think it is clear that only the latter can be the case, that the statement therefore has the status of a causal hypothesis. This presupposes, however, that we have a criterion for health and illness independent of this characterization. This is indeed given in the case of physical illness. Illness is impairment of the ability to function. It now becomes clear what is lacking both in the Greeks and in Fromm: we need a formal concept for psychological health of such a kind that would make it just as evident as it is in the case of physical health to say it would be irrational not to want to be healthy. This would then be a concept which would no longer be susceptible to the Kantian criticism. As with every other substantial conception, in the case of equilibrium, no matter how it is further defined, it is in no way evident that it is an immediate and necessary object of our will. But it would be a necessary object of our will *per consequentiam* if it is empirically correct that it is a causally necessary precondition for psychological health.

The question is therefore whether there is a concept for the impairment of the psychological ability to function which corresponds to the concept of physical illness. I think that such a concept is to be found in the psychoanalytic literature, although it is mostly mixed up with other specifications of a substantial kind. It has been clearly worked out in a paper by Lawrence Kubie, which sets itself this very task of finding an unequivocal and general criterion for pathological behavior. According to Kubie, it is the general characteristic of pathological behavior to be compulsive, automatically

(9) Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949).

2 (10) Here and in what follows I am indebted to Gertrud Nunner-Winkler. It was also she who called my attention to the paper by Kubie.

repeating itself "irrespective of the situation, the utility or the consequences of the act", in contrast to normal or healthy behavior, which is flexible and controlled by the will.³ (11) Of course, in a certain sense, compulsive behavior is also willed, but it is characteristic for such behavior that the person has to act in such a way whether he wants to or not. Such action is not accessible to, and therefore cannot be influenced by, deliberation, and is in this sense unfree, not chosen by myself, not autonomous. This concept of autonomy is naturally more formal and weaker than the Kantian one. It does not concern an autonomy of reason, but the autonomy of the entire person, and that means the autonomy of the sensually determined will, which is rational only in the sense of being able to deliberate. We have thus attained a formal concept of psychological illness which not only stands for an impairment of the psychological ability to function in general, but, more precisely, for the impairment of the ability of the will to function. Thereby precisely that is attained which we were looking for, a point of view independent of any particular subjective goals of our will and nevertheless decisive from the perspective of the will itself. As beings who want things in the sense of choosing them freely, we in any case do not want our free choice to be restricted. We are not normally conscious of the extent of the compulsiveness of our will. To the extent, however, in which we do become conscious of this, it would be irrational to want it, just as it is irrational to want to be physically ill. The connection here is indeed even closer, since wanting to be ill is undesirable only in itself. We might have good reasons for wanting to be ill as a means to other ends, but not for being unable to choose freely.⁴ (12)

What follows for the question about true happiness is (as existentialism has already taught us) that only what I really want in the sense of choosing it freely is something truly willed. Talk about true needs or properly understood interests turns out to be misleading because it awakens the impression that somewhere there are these true objects of our will in and of themselves and that they only have to be uncovered. The question about the truly willed does not concern the goals of our will, but *how* we will. The word "truly" is an adverb here, not an adjective. Of course, it would now have to be empirically clarified whether, when one wills in a noncompulsive way, there

³ (11) Lawrence S. Kubie, "The Fundamental Nature of the Distinction between Normality and Neurosis", in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 23 (New York: International University Press, 1954), pp. 167-204. Reprinted in: L. Kubie, *Symbol and Neurosis. Selected Papers*. See there esp. p. 142 and p. 161.

⁴ (12) Thus it would also suggest itself to conceive the unified concept of human illness not from the physical, but from the psychological standpoint. Physical illness is also a restriction, if only a peripheral one, of being able to control oneself freely. Being able to control oneself would then be the basic concept, not the ability to function.

are some goals toward which the will so constituted could not direct itself. Only by proceeding on this path could a substantial conception such as Fromm's be justified, and also the reference to true needs.

We cannot avert the question about true happiness by delegating it to an objective authority, not even to one within ourselves. It remains an issue for our own willing. I believe, then, that the ancient question about true happiness has not become obsolete today, but that it can only find a formal answer, formal in a sense similar to the answer found for the question of morality in Kant. Just as it would have to be shown for morality understood in a Kantian manner that and how the formality of the principle does not preclude the norms justified by this principle from being dependent on experience and situational,^{5 (13)} so it also seems to me that the formal answer to the question about true happiness merely constitutes the necessary point of departure. The questions that follow would be, first, what are the psychological conditions and the possible substantial goals of such a will, and second, what are the social conditions for these psychological conditions. It would then be tempting to examine which of the substantial suppositions contained in the Aristotelian answer to the question about the good life could be vindicated from this formal starting point.

^{5 (13)} I have developed this in an unpublished paper, "Der Absolutheitsanspruch der Moral und die historische Erfahrung".

ETHICS AND MATHEMATICS*

Friedrich Kambartel

Translated by Julius A. Gervasi and Thomas Rentsch

I

The topic "Ethics and Mathematics" sounds strange to modern ears.¹ This has not always been the case. The connection between mathematics and practical philosophy, was, for instance, well known to the members of the Platonic Academy. Socrates and Plato did understand philosophy in its basic intentions as practical philosophy: and the maxim which reportedly stood above the entrance to the Academy signifies that a thorough knowledge of mathematics is a particularly qualifying starting point for a successful discussion of the practical Good. Plato assigned a pedagogical function to mathematics: to free man from a sheer sense-bound thinking and reflecting and to lead him to those ideal structures which form the basis of a just organization of the human community. Since mathematics itself makes systematical use of a human possibility which must be available for practical argumentation as well, the *Μηδεις ἀγεωμέτρητος εισίτω* may be understood as follows: whoever is not yet (even) in a position to grasp and practice the methodical principles of geometry should not yet devote himself to a foundation for practical argumentation.

The thesis of the similarity in methods between mathematics and ethics — of which the lost Platonic lecture on mathematics and the Good is a today no longer ascertainable, possibly abstruse, Pythagorean continuation — has in the meantime been questioned by maintaining that science is value-free ("wertfrei"). The doctrine of the

* Translated from Manfred Riedel (Ed.), *Rehabilitierung der praktischen Philosophie*, Band I: *Geschichte, Probleme, Aufgaben* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1972).

¹ <This paper retains in the main the form of the lecture upon which it is based. At points the English version is not merely a translation, but a reformulation, originating from dissatisfaction with the translated text.>

[The Editor: More freedom has been allowed in the translation than a translator for us would be permitted to initiate. Pointed brackets ("<...>") have been introduced at only a few points to indicate especially clear deviations from the original German text.]

'Wertfreiheit' of science appears first in the value-judgment controversy of the social sciences and then in the neo-empiricist analysis of ethical statements. Of course, the thesis of a connection between science and ethics has suffered other attacks as well — from existentialist philosophers, for example. Two years before his death, already Pascal — whom Plato would have had to call a γεωμέτρητος — told Fermat in a letter of August 10, 1660, that he no longer wanted to discuss mathematical questions because mathematics was meaningless (*une occupation inutile*) with regard to the basic problems of human life.

The formulation made popular by Max Weber, that scientific reflection, genuinely understood, has to be "wertfrei", conceals the point that the value-judgment controversy concerns two quite different issues. The first contention is that argumentations trying to justify practical decisions have an irrational basis — not only *empirically*, but as a *necessary characteristic* of practical reasoning. That is to say that such argumentations can appeal only to socially relative world-views, standpoints and subjective interests — in short, to the so-called values — for their foundation. The second contention (virtually regarded as empirically evident) says that, in contrast to this, in scientific reflection we have at our disposal a practice which can be based upon a cogent intersubjective consensus. This leads to the appeal — which does not itself belong to science, of course — to make use of this possibility in a pure form, that is, not interspersed with what Max Weber calls "Kathederwertungen" (lecture-desk evaluations). This request is justified, already by Max Weber and to this day, on the ground that mixing up science, on the one hand, and ethics and politics based on value judgments, on the other, would encourage the illusion of a scientifically based and hence irrefutable practice, which would lend itself to manipulative purposes.

Max Weber, of course, has pointed out with sufficient clarity and in a lapidary manner the relevant aspects of the question. In the lecture, "Wissenschaft als Beruf" held in 1919, for instance, he asks that we "realize that ascertaining the facts — the mathematical and logical facts of the case or the inner structure of cultural goods — on the one hand, and answering the question about the *value* of the culture and of its individual contents, and with this how one should *act* within the cultural community, on the other hand, are two wholly *heterogeneous* problems".² The "scientific" advocacy of ethical attitudes is therefore characterized within the same context as "...senseless on principle, because the various value-scales of the world are entangled in insoluble conflict among themselves".³ A bit later

² *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. by J. Winckelmann (Tübingen: Mohr, 1951²), 585ff.

Weber states: "Here various gods...are quarreling with one another, and that for all time."⁴

One can regard the theory of the logical status of ethical language worked out within the philosophy of the Vienna Circle as the elaboration of Weber's basic convictions. Here as well the view prevails that an insurmountable boundary divides scientific argumentation from the justification of our actions (especially political actions), and that this boundary at the same time separates reason from irrationality.

Thus in Carnap's system of (scientific) disciplines, there is no longer any place for *ethics*.⁵ Ethics is neither to be understood as a "*Realwissenschaft*" (like empirical social science), nor as one of the "*Formalwissenschaften*" (like logic and mathematics), which are defined by their functions in the logical analysis of language(s). Ayer has brought the conclusion to the concise formula: "There cannot be such a thing as ethical science, if by ethical science one means the elaboration of a 'true' system of morals."⁶ But, what is then the origin of the delusion leading to the various attempts to elaborate an intersubjective practical philosophy? In answering this question, Logical Empiricism could take over the essential point of its critique of metaphysics: Again a *grammatical mistake* is imputed to the classical intersubjective ethical claims, a *deception* produced by the defects and pitfalls of our *language*. In Carnap's words, "a value statement is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form. It may have effects upon the actions of men, and these effects may either be in accordance with our wishes or not; but it is neither true nor false".⁷ Therefore, although practical judgments for the most part appear in the linguistic form of *statements*, according to Carnap this grammatical surface should not lead us to false conclusions as to their real meaning.

<In C. L. Stevenson's ethical investigations the empiricist views have found another representative expression.> In his ethical reflections, collected in 1944 under the title "Ethics and Language", Stevenson proceeds from the indisputable truth that our language cannot be reduced to the reproduction or description of facts. A quite *different* function of speech, for instance, is *to occasion actions*. This is clearly apparent in the case of *orders* and recommenda-

³ Ibid., 587.

⁴ Ibid., 588.

⁵ See Carnap's remarks on p. 23 of his "Intellectual Autobiography" added to the volume *The Philosophy of R. Carnap*, ed. P. A. Schilpp (London: Open Court and Cambridge University Press, 1963).

⁶ A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, (London: Gollancz, 1960²), 112.

⁷ *Philosophy and Logical Syntax*, (London, 1946), 24.

tions, but is also true with regard to the communication of *facts*, where facts serve as deterrent examples or indicate the false assumptions or bad consequences of previous actions. According to Stevenson's view it is of first importance in this connection that we have positive or negative *attitudes* toward objects, persons, actions, facts or institutions. Taking into account these attitudes for or against something, one can, by eliciting, strengthening, or changing them, gain influence over our actions. The predicates "pleasant", "beautiful", "good", as well as their corresponding negatives, following Stevenson's analysis, chiefly serve this purpose. If, for instance, we want someone to keep a promise or want to assert, in general, that promises should be kept, we can try to elicit a *negative attitude* toward the breaking of one's word by expressing this attitude ourselves and classifying a breach of promise as objectionable. Saying, then, that it is *mean* to break a promise, has no doubt the *form* of an assertion. In Stevenson's analysis, however, it expresses only a special emotion of the speaker. In most cases, therefore, the essential point of such condemnation consists in building up in others an emotional resistance against this type of behavior.

<Hence, moral judgments being acts of influencing, to attempt to justify a moral judgment, according to Stevenson, is futile...>

II

Mathematics seems to have no more to do with the value-judgment controversy than does any other science. Insofar as it wishes to be *science*, it must (according to the positivistic proposal) present itself as a piece of value-free argumentation. Things, however, are not as simple as that: a certain interpretation of the mathematician's activity, developed toward the turn of the century, has of late made an essential contribution to a concept of science in terms of which a rational understanding of moral judgment becomes so difficult. The conjunction "ethics and mathematics" thereby acquires a specific and this time an anti-Platonic meaning.

Particularly the question how we can soundly *justify* assertions has received, by a new concept of mathematical proof, an answer which hinders our understanding of the justification of practical orientations. It is advisable, therefore, that we first give detailed attention to the dominant views about the demonstration of mathematical theorems. These views are modeled after the pattern of the axiomatic-deductive theory.

The contemporary understanding of the axiomatic-deductive method of demonstration has developed out of the discussion of Aristotelian views. Especially in the *Posterior Analytics*, as we know, Aristotle advances the view that every demonstration must ultimately

rest on propositions which are no longer in need of proof — that is, propositions which can be immediately grasped or are “(self-)evident”. Departing from former linguistic usage,⁸ mathematical and other, Aristotle calls the elements of an evident basis for demonstration *axioms*. According to the Aristotelian proposal, demonstrating an assertion *a* means verifying *a* “mediately” in the light of the axioms, thereby giving it the position of a *theorem*. The activity in which this is performed is called “ἀπόδειξις” by Aristotle and later “deduction” or “proof”.

Classical theory of science has considered two possible ways of understanding deduction. It makes sense, historically, to call these two possibilities the *Aristotelian* and the *Cartesian* proposal, respectively. The Aristotelian proposal says that the steps leading from axioms to theorems, that is, the “inferences”, must themselves be based on *justified rules of procedure*. That the justification of the rules of inference must itself be performed within an axiomatic-deductive structure of the same pattern here leads to a basic difficulty which seems to be surmountable, in the end, solely by evidence claims for certain logical axioms. The Cartesian alternative — formulated, for instance, in the *Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii* — wants to avoid rules of inference altogether and appeals to immediate evidence for *every* step of the deduction. A mediately established assertion, accordingly, is distinguishable from an immediately evident assertion only because the former requires a whole chain of intuitions, the latter only a single intuition. In the controversy about the foundations of mathematics the Cartesian notion of deduction has been taken up again by Intuitionism (in the strict Brouwerian sense), as E. W. Beth has pointed out.⁹

Greek geometry and theory of proportions, in the form laid down in Euclid’s “*Elementa*”, was for many centuries the model of an axiomatic-deductive theory interpreted according to Aristotelian or Cartesian ideas. Not by chance, therefore, did reflections on the foundations of geometry, which evolved in the nineteenth century, lead to an examination and criticism of the classical interpretation of axiomatic-deductive connections.

The starting point of the more recent geometrical theory is directly relevant, in the light of what has been said so far. It consisted in the remark that the so-called parallels axiom enjoyed — already on account of its complicated formulation — an exceptional position

⁸ See A. Szabó, “Anfänge des Euklidischen Axiomen-Systems”, *Archive for the History of Exact Science* 1 (1960/62), 37-106; *Idem*, “Axiom I”, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. by J. Ritter.

⁹ E. W. Beth, “Le Savoir déductif dans la pensée Cartesienne”, *Cahiers de Royaumont, Philosophie II: Descartes* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1957), 141-65.

among the axioms of Euclidian geometry. The conjecture suggested itself readily, that $\langle \dots \rangle$ the parallels axiom in relation to its complexity needed a complicated "mediate" insight. Looking for proofs of the parallels axiom therefore became a favorite intelligence game in mathematics. The constant failure of such endeavors led Gauss, as we know, to the first so-called proof of the independence of the parallels axiom from the other axioms of Euclidian geometry. An adequate methodical understanding of such proofs, however, was not reached until the end of the nineteenth century and, more particularly, in the controversy about Hilbert's new axiomatic system of Euclidian geometry.

It was mainly Gottlob Frege who worked out the point that Hilbert wanted the axioms of his geometrical system to be interpreted only as formal expressions — that is, expressions with (not quantified) indeterminately indicating symbols for names and predicates in a logical sense.¹⁰ Statements can then be obtained from these formal expressions by simply substituting meaningful signs, i.e., proper names and predicates in a logical sense, for the indeterminately indicating symbols. A substitution of this kind leading to *true* statements is nowadays termed a *model* of the formal expressions considered. A statement A can then be understood as *independent* of statements B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n if and only if for the corresponding formal expressions a and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$ there is a model not only of $a, \beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$, but also of $\rightarrow a, \beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$.

So the concept of independence for axioms made it necessary to proceed to the *logical forms* of geometrical axioms. In addition, already from an Aristotelian point of view it suggested itself to understand the deductive part of an axiomatic-deductive theory as purely logical reasoning. Then, however, the mathematical proofs also should be possible solely taking the logical form of the axioms as basis. Furthermore, in the development of algebra, many demonstrations appeared, which, if seen as formal derivations, could be treated all at once for quite different statements of the same logical form.

Thus Hilbert's conclusion imposed itself also independently of problems of classical axiomatics: that, strictly speaking, the basis of axiomatic-deductive theories should consist of formal expressions and not of evident statements, that is, that axiomatic-deductive theories should be understood as "*formal*" in character. Further-

¹⁰ See Frege, "Über die Grundlage der Geometrie", *Jahresbericht der deutschen Mathematiker-Vereinigung*, 12 (1903), 319-24, 368-75; 15 (1906), 293-309, 377-403, 423-30. M. Steck has partially edited the correspondence between Frege, Hilbert, and H. Liebmann on this problem. "Ein unbekannter Brief von G. Frege über Hilberts erste Vorlesung über die Grundlagen der Geometrie", *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Math.-naturw. Klasse, 1940, 6. Abh., and "Unbekannte Briefe Freges über die Grundlagen der Geometrie und Antwortbrief Hilberts an Frege", *Ibid.*, 1941, 2. Abh.

more, the formal interpretation of mathematics (and with it geometry) presented a solution to just that problem by which it had been produced: The very fact that there should also be models for axiom-systems generated from the Euclidian axiom-system by substituting the negation of an axiom for the axiom itself (for the parallels axiom, for instance) shook the easy assurance with which the Euclidian axioms were acknowledged as *evident* principles of space-analysis. Thus Hilbert's proposals not only offered the advantage of describing an increasingly widespread mathematical practice but also, at the same time, of regarding the (inconvenient) problem of evidence for axioms as obsolete. If the axioms, namely, are to be regarded as nothing but *forms* of sentences, then the problem of their truth – and with it, of course, also the question how in mathematics basic insights are attainable – no longer arises. The purpose of our discussion is not to deal with the details of this well-known development. I have sketched it only in order to be able to show how mathematical demonstrations are to be understood in the light of this revolution in the axiomatic-deductive way of reasoning.

Here, the normal claim now is that these demonstrations consist solely in formally controllable steps leading from initial *formal* expressions to other such expressions. Whoever performs this type of deduction – *ex officio*, according to a view quite widespread nowadays, the mathematician – no longer considers himself responsible for the choice of (justified) axioms but only for the orderly execution of the formal steps of the deduction. If we look at the matter more closely, the rules of deduction will have to be put at the mathematician's discretion as well, so that only the answer to the question whether a deductive step is in accordance with a formal rule will now require an "insight". Every other so-called insight here already presupposes something, namely, from the formalist standpoint, a resolution which cannot be forced upon everyone, a subjective view or a decision. Considering precisely the insights of derivability as immediately available for everybody then means that the justification of an assertion is presuppositionless if the subject of this assertion is the correctness of a formal deduction.

Moral questions by nature have material content and therefore cannot be reduced to statements about symbolic operations. By following, like Max Weber, the above sketched formal minimalization of justification and, consequently, of science, intersubjectivity and rationality, one especially disqualifies the rational claim of practical argumentation as an illusion. Thus, the formal-deductive understanding of mathematical argumentation dominant today leads to an assessment of ethics which is in accordance not with the Socratic-Platonic but rather with the sophistic view.

On the other hand, today's institutionally established mathematical and scientific activity is characterized by a subjective interest to let ethical arguments appear to be, in the end, irrational. What scientists are doing, individually or in groups, is increasingly becoming accessible to fewer and fewer people. Every control, therefore, is dependent upon an *esoteric* group — a group, moreover, which consists in most cases precisely of those people who are the target of the control itself. Now, science belongs not only to the relatively highly endowed professions but also to those human activities which are positively sanctioned in other ways — for instance, by free disposal of time and by social prestige. As no other institution, therefore, science makes it possible for those working in its area to lead a pleasant life, supported by public means and almost undisturbed by public control. As a consequence of this situation, a number of subjective and often odd amusements, which would not withstand a serious moral argumentation, have found a place in scientific institutions. In mathematics, for instance, this applies to those formal theories for which no justified field of application can be shown, as, for example, the formal-axiomatic versions of transfinite set-theory and those parts of current mathematical deduction-games, which make essential use of this framework.

But even a mathematics limited to formal deduction can by no means dispense with practical justification if it wants to base the goals of its, after all, socially subsidized activity and the applied methodical norms on reasonable orientations. As a matter of fact, the necessity to justify the mathematical maxims and goals is, if not actually seen, at least dimly realized, particularly because mathematics has, time and again, to render account to the public. The justifications actually given are mainly aesthetic or naively pragmatic in character.¹¹ Aesthetic arguments, however, are obviously rather arbitrary without a rational aesthetics. Since the philosophers and aestheticians, who treat aesthetic questions *ex officio*, have not been able so far to offer reliable orientations, the mathematicians would themselves have to work out what they naively presuppose when giving mathematics an aesthetic basis. Also, the pragmatism to which mathematicians like to refer often gives way to delusive justifications rather than to serious argument. This applies particularly to the argument of the potential tools.¹² According to this argument, occupying oneself with a formal mathematical theory is

¹¹ Here and in what follows, see P. Lorenzen, "Moralische Argumentationen im Grundlagenstreit der Mathematiker", *Methodisches Denken*, (Frankfurt a/M.: Suhrkamp, 1968), 152-161.

¹² See my "Mathematics and the Concept of Theory", *Proceedings of the 1964 International Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science* (Amsterdam, 1965), 210-19, esp. 214.

already justified if the existence of a relevant model, at some time in the future, cannot be excluded at present — if, in short, the theory is a potential tool for future application. Obviously, *any* formal theory which has not yet proven to be inconsistent can be justified in this way. If one divests the potential tools argument of its mathematical context, the point in question is obviously the invitation to prepare means for totally unknown ends. Then, however, it becomes apparent that such a practice of production cannot claim rational consent. Where the attempts to justify human activities have fallen so far behind the Platonic endeavors, it can come as no surprise that the inevitability of unjustified starting points for argument is the content of a comfortable faith.

III

Whoever argues against the <...> positivistic interpretation of moral statements, in the way we have pointed out, should finally put forward a proposal for a *transsubjective* understanding of ethical arguments. Therefore, at this point, I shall pass on to such a proposal. <It will provide an understanding of reason, which is the same for ethics and mathematics.>

In pursuing this goal we must first call to mind something common to mathematical assertions as well as maxims (rules of action) and goals, namely that they have or at least can have a use for the *orientation of our actions*. This is clearly the case with maxims and goals, but is relevant also for mathematical assertions, for instance when they secure the premises of certain rules of action, thus making such rules actually applicable. In the demonstration of mathematical assertions we work out and attain capacities to operate in certain schematical ways. And, of course, answers to the question whether and how we can do what we wish to do are important for the orientation of our actions.

For an orientation of our actions the term “consent” can now be introduced without recurring to evidences. Consent, in a binding sense, can here mean the resolution and subsequently the readiness to take account of the orientation in question in practical deliberation, that is, to base one’s own actions, or common practice, *prima facie* upon these orientations. Therefore, the terminological rule is valid, that there is no real (only “verbal”) consent if the pertinent consequences are not present in further deliberation.

That the recourse to evidence (in the sense of an immediate intuition) is not available to us here means, in the sense of the mentioned terminological rule, a certain primacy of practice with respect to theory. Where a purely theoretical assent has become dubious, practical obligation — and, apparently, only practical obligation — still

remains meaningful.¹³ Since private evidence as well as plain decision rightly carry the blemish of the esoteric and of the group-relative, the point now must be to replace such subjective principles of orientation by dialogical deliberation aimed at reaching an agreement among all those concerned. As necessary conditions of such an agreement I should like to mention freedom from prejudices, from coercion, and from persuasion. On the basis of the notion of consent it can be strictly said what the terms "prejudiced", "uncoerced", and "persuasive" shall mean.

A *dialogue* is called *unprejudiced* if and only if all participants are prepared, for the sake of this effort, to allow that all the (pre-)orientations of their actions be called into question, i.e., to suspend them for the effort underway, until they are eventually established again, perhaps in a modified form, as *common* orientations. This only emphasizes again the situation that for a *transsubjective* orientation nobody has at his disposal incontestable decisions and evidences in advance.¹⁴ Furthermore, a dialogue is called *uncoerced* in which consent or dissent is not dependent upon sanctions or gratifications. Finally a dialogue is called *persuasive* (or rhetorical in the pejorative sense of the word) in which consent or dissent are gained by appealing against one's better judgment to inconsideredly accepted preorientations of other participants. The expression "against one's better judgment" remains to be explained. My suggestion here is as follows: someone appeals against his better judgment to the preorientations of others if and only if he himself shows elsewhere by word and deed that he does not accept these preorientations unquestioningly.

On the basis of these terminological determinations we can now say when a dialogue shall be called rational, namely, if and only if it is unprejudiced, uncoerced, and unpersuasive. Using Habermas' terminology, one could speak here of an *undistorted* or *ideal communication situation*. A consent of all participants, which has been attained with the help of a rational dialogue, may be called *rationally attained*.

¹³ That (subjective) inclinations can be opposed to one's consent to a theoretical or practical (in the strict sense) orientation and can even get the better of one's "insight" in the practice which follows (that, in other words, action "against one's better judgment", does occur), may be a meaningful description also on the basis of the notion of consent we are here suggesting. It is necessary, however, to pay careful attention to the distinction between 1) the consequences of consent for subsequent deliberations and decisions (in an institutional framework, for instance) — and 2) the consequences of consent for actions which participants perform above and beyond that. The practical dimension of obligation which consent entails is here intended to refer only to the first type of implications; in this sense it still remains "theoretical" in character. I am grateful to F. Koppe of the University of Konstanz for clarifying conversations on this point.

¹⁴ The suggestion to replace the commonly used term "intersubjective", which is too much associated with the empiristic tradition in philosophy of science, by the term 'transsubjective', comes from P. Lorenzen and J. Mittelstrass. See, for example, P. Lorenzen, *Normative Logic and Ethics* (Mannheim/Zürich: Bibliographisches Institut, 1969), p. 82.

To identify the justification of a practical orientation with a rationally attained consent to it would be a mistake. We surely expect of a justification — for example, a mathematical proof — that its validity extends beyond the limited circle of dialogue participants consulting together at a given time and place. This means: those who are concerned about a *justified* orientation want to orient themselves in terms of what can win the consent of *all* those for whom practice in accordance with this orientation is relevant. They want, in short, an orientation to which all those who are concerned by it can give their consent.

I have to add immediately that the demand for inclusion of all persons concerned cannot make a *prediction* about factual consent outside the original deliberating circle the criterion for a successful justification. As a rule, there will be a number of non-participating but concerned people not willing or not able to enter into a rational dialogue in the specified sense. For these people it is generally conceivable that they will not feel bound by the results of a rational deliberation. The only way remaining is to consider impartially how they *would have had* to proceed in a rational dialogue situation imagined for them. In the light of these preparatory steps, a *justification* of a practical orientation *b* can be understood as a rational dialogue (or the outline of such a dialogue) leading to agreement by all participants that all of those concerned by *b*-oriented practice, in an undistorted communication situation fictionally set up for them, can be brought to consent to *b*.

Justification in the sense defined makes it necessary to abstract from the actual discussion group — to think for others as well. At the same time, it takes into account that we cannot do without a rationally attained common *actual* consent. It follows that a justification can, on principle, be only provisional in character. It is always possible that new arguments, advanced, for instance, by new discussion partners, will make it necessary to rework a given justification in a subsequent dialogue. The effort to detect and eliminate distortions which are still at work in one's own dialogues, heretofore regarded as rational, must be carried on all the time as well.

IV

One might think that the given concept of justification, referring essentially to discussion and action, does not apply to the practice of demonstration in mathematics. Mathematical treatises and textbooks seem to present monological and purely theoretical chains of insights *par excellence* — chains of insights which have deductive relationships as their subject. In the light of this concept of justification, the fact that an operational rule has been correctly applied becomes

the basic evidence of mathematics. And yet, insofar as a mathematical textbook addresses itself to *readers*, here too the point is not to transfer feelings of immediate insight, but to make the author's suggestions the basis of the reader's activity to follow, especially of his or her willingness to continue going through the author's argument on this basis. To the very extent that mathematics is related to operations within deductive calculi, the certainty of mathematical procedures can be understood as a praxis-oriented consent. We make use of established statements of this kind, for instance, by taking into account the producibility of certain graphic figures for further mathematical practice, or in the case of extramathematical applications, eventually perhaps for a practice aimed at the satisfaction of elementary needs.

That the transsubjective consent to deducibility statements has nothing to do with unmediated insight — that is, insight which is not due to efforts at reaching a rational agreement — is made clear by pointing to the set of linguistic instruments which are being presupposed all along. Thus, considering rules like " $a, b \Rightarrow a \text{ and } b$ ", an understanding about the use of the rule-arrow " \Rightarrow " or of an equivalent symbolic representation of rules for schematical operation must already have been reached for a reliable use to be made of them in the formulation and application of specific rules. Something similar applies to the indefinitely indicating symbols necessary for the formulation of rules. In introducing such elements of a linguistic basis of mathematics, however, we cannot once more refer to an axiomatic-deductive system. For, if we take this system to be "formal", that is, to be a deductive calculus, we would already have to use those elements whose acquisition underlies the understanding of rule systems. Axioms provided with a not merely formal meaning naturally presuppose an even greater linguistic competence. This applies particularly to the current practice of using the terms "set" and "structure" in a reformulation of large parts of mathematics. These steps cannot be taken *in a justified way*, in the sense we have suggested, before we have justified *language norms*, with whose help we can reach a rational consent concerning the language in which to discuss sets and structures.

Thus, consent to proposals which constitute rational communication is necessarily connected already with the first steps in mathematics. Whoever, therefore, admits the possibility of transsubjective consent to the results of mathematical practice must likewise do so for the methodical norms leading to such a consent. Since private evidence cannot be claimed for these norms, it is already hopeless for mathematics to rely on evidence-theoretical concepts instead of the justification procedure we have outlined. With this insight, however, we have achieved more, namely, a first overcoming of Max Weber's

thesis that practical judgments are ultimately incapable of justification and hence should be eliminated from the practice of science. Whoever maintains this thesis cannot even comprehend how mathematics as a science is possible. Thus mathematics, rightly understood, wherever it represents a piece of successful justification, can still be a school where the possibility of non-sophistic normative argumentation can be experienced. Mathematics can be such, however, only if it satisfies a Platonic demand, relevant again in the contemporary foundational discussion. This is the demand not to refuse *τὸν λόγον δίδοναι*, in other words, the admonishment not to release mathematics from the justification of the first steps.

PLATO AND THE IDEA OF THE GOOD:
ON THE FUNCTION OF THE IDEA OF THE GOOD*

Wolfgang Wieland

Translated by David Mallon

I

No one seriously doubts that the assumption of ideas provides a central theme of Plato's philosophy. Controversy is first sparked by questions that can be posed on the basis of this assumption: How is the logical, ontological, and axiological status of the idea to be determined correctly? How are the structure, the forms of justification, and the adequacy of the theory based on the assumption of ideas (*Ideenannahme*) to be judged? How are the indications to be evaluated that appear to point out that Plato did not assume the existence of ideas in all stages of his development? Every interpretation of Plato must make sense not only of the fact that Plato himself already criticizes the assumption of ideas with solid reasons, but also of the fact that one misses the assumption of ideas in many places where it would for systematic reasons at first be expected.

One does not always recall that the assumption of ideas as such

* Translated from Wolfgang Wieland, "Platon und der Nutzen der Idee: Zur Funktion der Idee des Guten", in *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 1 (1976): 17-33.

The article grew out of an investigation the results of which the author has in the meantime set forth in *Platon und die Formen des Wissens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982). This *Work* proceeds from an analysis of the critique of the Platonic corpus and investigation of the philosophical significance of the literary form of dialogue. It attempts to show the significance the forms of non-propositional knowledge have for Plato. Thus it pertains principally to the forms of practical knowledge, i.e., of capacities and proficiencies, especially, however, of the instrumental knowledge that determines how we relate to things and to human discourse. These are the forms of knowledge that also, when they are made objects of relevant and well-founded utterances, cannot, by the use of these utterances alone, be shared. Also the assumption of ideas proceeds on this basis.

only rarely becomes an explicit theme of discussion in Plato. Often it is only spoken of indirectly: for example, when it is only incidentally mentioned in connection with the treatment of other themes; when it is introduced as an easily acceptable hypothesis and as one which itself requires no further foundation; or finally, also, when Plato treats it only in the mirror of analogies. Therefore one will do well to realize from the start that in every discussion of the so-called doctrine of ideas (*Ideenlehre*) there is no consensus at all as to precisely what this doctrine really means. It may today generally be recognized that the famous two-world model, which has been attributed to Plato again and again in the tradition, greatly oversimplifies the problem. In addition there is a methodological difficulty. The stylistic form of Plato's literary work, the dialogue, does not permit a view or doctrine, which is always expounded by a participant in the dialogue, to be directly attributed to the author as a theory advocated by him. Furthermore, not only does Plato make thematic propositions about the idea, but he also shows us by means of the presentation of the dialogue how one can make use of the assumption of ideas and can speak of this assumption in an unthematic way and with its help. Thus the supposition is substantiated that precisely those texts that only show us how the idea is dealt with, without at the same time thematizing it, can contain insights that do not enter into a systematic theory of ideas which is constructed or reconstructed by logical and philosophical means.

But then, remarkably little fuss is made in Plato's work about the introduction of the ideas precisely in the majority of the passages that are "classic" for the assumption of ideas. Here the assumption of ideas appears obvious, easily understandable, and in need of no detailed justification. Socrates does not usually have to make any special effort when he wants to gain the agreement of his partner.¹ Only rarely are speeches delivered in connection with the assumption of ideas in which this assumption demands exceptionally lengthy efforts that would overburden most men.² This discrepancy cannot be overcome very well by recourse to the genesis of Plato's works. At any rate, a genetic explanation, in most cases, is not a genuine solution of the difficulty. To be sure, there exists agreement today on the relative chronology of Plato's work in its main features. Yet the essential understanding of the problems treated there has hardly been ad-

¹ Compare *Phaedo* (*Phd.*) 65b, 76d, 100b; *Hippias Major* 289; *Republic* (*Rep.*) 476b, 479a, 486d, 493e, 501b, 507a, 596a; *Cratylus* (*Crat.*) 389b, 390a, 439b; *Euthydemus* (*Euthyd.*) 300e; *Euthyphro* (*Euthyph.*) 5d, 6d; even *Parmenides* (*Parm.*) 129aff still fits well into this context.

² *Symposium* 209eff; *Rep.* 506dff; *Timaeus* (*Tim.*) 51e. Compare also *Philebus* (*Phil.*) 16c: here Socrates considers it easy to characterize his method but difficult to apply it.

vanced by it. No one will seriously want to maintain that the problems connected with the assumption of ideas can be more easily solved if one has the possibility of assigning the texts to different stages of Plato's development. The hypothesis always holds good that one has not yet understood a substantive problem if he can only offer genetic explanations for its solution.

Whereas, if one not only takes into account the literary and genetic contexts, but also, and above all, the systematic context of the respective accounts of the idea, then other possibilities of differentiation arise. Namely, then one will have to distinguish whether ideas are only mentioned, whether they function as explicitly or tacitly introduced hypotheses, whether a theory of ideas is developed or criticized, and finally whether the idea of the good is thematized.³ Ideas are mentioned only when Plato, in attempting to define normative predicates, adopts an expression belonging to colloquial speech and uses it to signify what is intended but not attained by the question of definition. Here the introduction of the idea causes no difficulties: it appears as though it had always already been presupposed.⁴ If it is introduced as a hypothesis, then what was already practiced implicitly is only made explicit and formulated.⁵ In this case one is exempted from the necessity of determining its logical and ontological status. If one masters the art of dealing with hypotheses, no further difficulties need come up. Difficulties first arise when the ideas themselves and as such become the object of a theory. Thus we come to a result that at first appears surprising, namely, that it is precisely the passages in which a theory of ideas deserving of the name is developed which indicate at the same time the difficulties connected with this theory.⁶ The presentation of the theory of ideas and its criticism go hand in hand. Therefore one must be sceptical of all interpretations that diagnose the first part of the *Parmenides* as Plato's renunciation of the theory of ideas. In truth, only a deficient form of the theory of ideas is present here, and its deficiency reveals itself in the fact that it is developed as a theory closed within itself and not related to the meta-theoretical final authority (*Instanz*) of the idea of the good. For only under this presupposition can the difficulties be resolved to which the discussion of the relationship between the world of ideas and the sensible world of motion leads.

The classical text for the treatment of the idea of the good is the

³ "εἰδος" or "ἰδέα" or the indexing of a corresponding predicate with the help of "αὐτό".

⁴ Compare note 2.

⁵ *Phd.* 100aff; cf. on the hypothetical method also *Meno* (*Men.*) 86eff, *Rep.* 510bff.

⁶ *Parm.* 128e-135c; *Sophist* 248a-250c.

famous use of analogies in Books VI and VII of the *Republic*. It is often overlooked that this use of analogies is meant to explicate neither a hypothesis of ideas nor the theory of ideas, but rather the special position of the idea of the good. It is the speech about the idea of the good and knowledge of it that first leads to the difficulties that still remain hidden in the mere assumption of ideas, difficulties that lead Plato to make exclusive use here of indirect ways of expression and metaphorical means of presentation. Thus already the wording of the speech about the idea of the good in the *Republic* makes it clear that one substantially, as well as methodologically, sets foot in a new region — new not only in relation to the natural attitude, but also, and just as much, in relation to all other possibilities of speaking about ideas.

II

In these circumstances one is entitled to assume that it is less the relatively unproblematic assumption of ideas that signifies the center of Plato's thinking than the idea of the good, emphasized by Plato on account of its special position. Upon what is this special position based?

The idea of the good can at first be distinguished by assigning it primacy in the hierarchy of the ideas. In this case it is admittedly not differentiated in principle from other ideas but only in content. Even so, such an interpretation can be based on the fact that quite often the idea of the good is named in association with other ideas without being categorially differentiated from them.⁷ But one can also attempt to interpret the idea of the good by iterating the relation between the thing and the idea. In this case the idea of the good would be differentiated from all other ideas categorially as well. It would be, as it were, an idea of the ideas and would occupy the position of a meta-level in relation to the ordinary ideas. Nevertheless, neither interpretation does full justice to the special position of the idea of the good. For in both cases no more fundamental problems could be posed regarding insight into the idea of the good once the level of knowledge of ideas is first reached. An adequate interpretation of the idea of the good must, on the contrary, account precisely for the following facts: that insight into this idea can only be reached through a long and laborious process; furthermore, that

⁷ For example, *Phd.* 65d, 75c, 76d, 77a, 100b; even in the context of the thematic discussion of the idea of the good, this idea can occasionally be treated as one idea among other ideas (for example, *Rep.* 507a).

in Plato's model state it is this insight which first gives the designated guardian the ability to perceive his political office; and finally, that the idea of the good has to fulfill functions that not only substantially but also structurally differ from the function of all other ideas.

Plato does not develop a systematic theory of the idea of the good. Still, the indications that he gives are sufficient to permit a sufficiently precise determination of functions that establish its special position. An important leading concept in this context is that of *use* (*Nutzen*). So it is said of the idea of the good that through it just things (*dikaia*), and all others that make use of it, first become *serviceable* (*brauchbar*) and useful (*nützlich*).⁸ What is meant by this? It concerns a determination of the idea of the good that is given in the context of the discussion of the program of education provided for the guardians of the model state. This discussion itself, in turn, is contained in the treatment of the concept of justice. With a view to the correspondence between parts of the soul and classes in the state, a formula had been developed according to which the essence of justice consists in doing-one's-own (*Idiopragie*), namely, that each person does not do many things but only one, his own thing. The remaining cardinal virtues were then determined on the basis of this scheme. Here the modern interpreter could raise the objection that this only offers an empty formula. Yet it is Socrates who, as the discussion leader of the *Republic*, points to the insufficiency of these determinations: Only an outline⁹ of justice and the other virtues is to have been provided up to that point and, contrary to the original expectation, the determination of justice thus far provided is not the sought after highest knowledge. Rather, to attain this a longer way would be necessary. With this, the discussion of the idea of the good begins. Therefore the context already shows, in any case, that one function of the idea of the good consists in filling out and concretizing that of which at first only an outline could be given.

Thus it is not a matter of revoking a previously provided definition of justice. It concerns the insight that a definition, regardless of its correctness, cannot accomplish precisely what had been expected of it. However, it was not merely expected of this definition that it contain generally valid knowledge, as was expected of every other definition with which the Platonic Socrates involved himself. Rather, a definition should at the same time provide a procedure allowing a decision to be made with certainty as to whether or not a particular case falls under the concept. But it is precisely this that

⁸ *Rep.* 505a: ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα... ἣ δὲ καὶ δίκαια καὶ τὰλλα προσχρησάμενα χρήσιμα καὶ ὠφέλιμα γίνονται.

⁹ ὑπογραφή (*Rep.* 504d); in this case ὑπογραφή is opposed to ἀκρίβεια (exactness).

the definition can never accomplish. A definition alone never extends to the particular case. It is precisely the first book of the *Republic* that shows how with regard to every attempted definition of justice a concrete case can be constructed to which this definition no longer applies. One only escapes this danger by holding on to an empty formula. In every case, however, there is need of a final authority that can apply the definition correctly and that is capable, not of misusing an empty formula with respect to its possible ambivalence, but rather of filling it with content in an adequate way.

Such a final authority is determined in Plato through the relation to the idea of the good. It is this idea that is able to regulate the correct use of all other ideas and of definitions too. There is nothing which could not be missed in appropriate circumstances and thus it is precisely one function of the idea of the good to exclude possible misuse of things. For no thing is capable of this in and of itself. Thus in this sense it is said that everything else first becomes serviceable and useful through its relation to the idea of the good. The context of the passage (*Rep.* 505a) makes it clear that this also holds for knowledge and possession. Without the good no possession is of use; if we do not know the idea of the good, we have no use for anything else, no matter how much we know about it. But this means that only when one is in possession of this insight can he make use of all other knowledge. No knowledge shows in and of itself whether it is really worth knowing.

When Plato characterizes the idea of the good as the principle that first makes all other things serviceable and useful, he turns to a figure of thinking that also occurs within his writings in many other contexts. This is the thought of the primacy of use: Only the one who can use a thing is competent to judge it correctly, and not the one who only produces, invents, or owns it.¹⁰ This thought holds not only for such a trivial relationship as that between the rider who uses the bridle and the harness-maker who produces it. It also lies at the base of the statements in which Plato reports his doubts about the possibility of fixing philosophical thinking in writing.¹¹ It even holds where it is a matter of the correct handling of laws. The one who adequately judges the results of legislation is not the legislator, but rather the one who makes use of these results. With this, the rank of legislation has been relativized by Plato, totally in opposition to its high estimation in the Greek tradition. Law for him is never an ultimate principle of the political order, for it is always still in need of a final authority that masters the art of handling it correctly. Thus it

¹⁰ Compare *Euthyd.* 280bff, 289aff, *Crat.* 390b, *Charmides* (*Charm.*) 171eff, *Rep.* 601dff.

¹¹ Compare *Phaedrus* 274df.

is no accident that, in the construction of the Platonic model state, legislation is only of subordinate significance; the elevated position of the education of the guardians bears this out. They are supposed to have insight into the idea of the good, which confers on them the ability to do justice to every political situation. The application of the laws is also regulated through this ability.

If one observes that insight into the idea of the good is expounded in the *Republic* as the knowledge reserved for the guardians, then a comparison is suggested with the discussion of the art of kingship, which provides the central problem of the *Statesman*. In the course of this dialogue a large number of disciplines are investigated with respect to whether familiarity with them constitutes the knowledge necessary for the ideal guardians. It becomes clear that none of the disciplines definable by the statement of a subject matter can be identified with the sought after art of kingship, for the art of kingship can place each of these disciplines at its own service. It is the final authority which first makes the correct use of the discipline and its results. Thus the art of kingship does not permit itself to be substantially determined, as do the other disciplines, but rather it is precisely through its property of relating to all other disciplines in such a way that it places them at its service and regulates their application that it is determined. As the art of kingship, it is not bound to laws, which, in any case, could never do justice to the constantly changing relationships in the human realm.¹² Thus the art of kingship is precisely what is not characterized by a scheme of action fixed once and for all. Rather it is directed to the state, which exists in the world and in time, and in which all things constantly change in a never precisely foreseeable way. Thus finally even its relation to temporal contingency can enter into the characterization of the art of kingship: it should not itself accomplish something but rather should rule over those who can accomplish something, and thereby recognize the right and wrong time for the decisions about the most important things for the state (compare *Statesman* 305c f). Of course the idea of the good is not spoken of directly here. One cannot overlook, however, the fact that one of its functions coincides with the function of the art of kingship as found in the *Statesman*.

Insight into the idea of the good consequently confers the ability to use and employ everything else correctly: possessions, arts, knowledge. It is an insight that — in contrast to all other knowledge — cannot itself be instrumentalized. What can be instrumentalized and employed for any kind of purpose remains necessarily ambiva-

¹² It is of terminological interest, above all with regard to *Rep.* 504e (compare note 9), that the law's lack of accuracy consists precisely in the fact that it can never do full justice to the individual case (*Statesman* 294b).

lent. Thus the function of overcoming the ambivalence of all things and goods also belongs to the idea of the good. Therefore the good is also never to be conceived in a thing, a formula, a scheme of action, or a definition. In each of these cases one must always pay attention to the final authority, which works in the background and possesses the ability to make a good or bad use of everything. When this use of insight into the idea of the good is regulated, the at first ambivalent thing has been made *useful*. It need therefore by no means be surprising that in Plato there is a thin line between the concepts of the good and the useful.¹³ Where a finer differentiation is not needed, they can even be used as interchangeable concepts. Nonetheless, Plato never speaks of an idea of the useful. This is because the useful is always only in a derived sense good, namely, insofar as it is related to the good in a genuine sense, that is, to the idea of the good.

The ambivalence that belongs to every concept and every thing by its very nature had been made evident to Plato above all through the practice of contemporary sophistic argumentation. In the man-is-the-measure proposition of Protagoras, it had been conceptualized and elevated to a principle. Plato's confrontation with the sophists does not have the form of a confrontation of content-related theses. The critique is directed toward another goal: the sophists are reproached for merely selling knowledge like merchants, without, however, being able to say which of it is useful and which not (*Prot.* 313dff). Thus it is not the contents of knowledge as such that are criticized. Rather what is criticized is that they are products (*Gebilde*) that can be instrumentalized for particular purposes. Thus the sophists open up the possibility of making deliberate use of the ambivalence of every concept and thing for any purpose whatsoever. Just one especially striking example of this, for instance, is that before a court the weaker argument can be made the stronger, as the famous maxim expresses. It is therefore consistent when Plato reproaches the sophists less for their arts themselves than for the ambivalence of these arts, and above all, for the purposes at the service of which they, to be sure, do not have to be placed but all the same can be placed.

The idea of the good, which has to make all knowledge first "useful" and to regulate its employment, has then, however, also the function of guaranteeing the correct dealing with ideas. It is easy to postulate the existence of ideas but hard to make the correct use of them. The doctrine of ideas as it is developed in the *Parmenides* by

¹³ Compare, e.g., *Charm.* 169b, 174b; *Men.* 87e, 97a; *Protagoras (Prot.)* 333d; *Lysias* 210d, 217b; *Gorgias (Gorg.)* 477a, 499d, 525b; *Euthyph.* 13b; *Crat.* 416e; *Euthyd.* 292d; *Rep.* 333b, 379b; *Theaetetus* 177d.

the very young Socrates is one example of a dealing with ideas that still lacks the orientation toward the idea of the good.¹⁴ Here the famous difficulties immediately arise; only the authority of the old Parmenides, who calls attention to the difficulties connected with the alternative (135d), can still save the assumption of ideas. In the case of the ideas of the *Parmenides*, we have to do with an assumption which, expressed in the language of the *Republic*, has not yet become useful since it lacks relation to the idea of the good. The more mature Socrates in the literary fiction, in dialogues that are actually chronologically earlier than the *Parmenides*, deals with the ideas in a way that does not give rise to these difficulties.

III

In the discussion that introduces the presentation of the analogies in the *Republic*, still another function is expounded by which the idea of the good is distinguished from the other ideas. There it is a matter of the following consideration: if it is a question of, for example, the just or beautiful, then it is possible to choose what appears to be just or beautiful even when one knows that it is only a matter of an appearance that is not ensured by reality. Thus if it is a matter of the justice of an action or of the legality of a possession, then it is conceivable that one will content himself with the corresponding appearance. Nothing corresponding to this holds for the good. Here no one can satisfy himself with what only has the appearance of being good, but each person strives for what is actually good (compare *Rep.* 505dff). How is this special position of the good, which practically dissolves even the traditional ideal of the "beautiful and the good" (*Kalokagathia*), to be understood?

It is not claimed that in the case of the good no difference could occur between appearance and reality. It is also not claimed that the agent could not err regarding the true good. This thesis merely means that a good that is only apparent but not real is as such no possible goal for the acting will: it is necessarily always oriented toward what it holds to be truly good. In this respect the good is that for which each soul strives, as expressed by Plato with a formula predominant in the moral-philosophical tradition.¹⁵

Thus it is a matter of the claim of a teleology appropriate to the acting will or to the soul, solely on the basis of the soul's nature.

¹⁴ Of course 129aff also speaks of an idea of the good, yet it is here paralleled with the other ideas (compare note 7). A special position is not attributed to it in this context.

¹⁵ *Rep.* 505d: ὁ δὲ διώκει μὲν ἅπαντα ψυχὴ καὶ τοῦτον ἕνεκα πάντα πράττει. (That which indeed every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does all things.) Compare *Georg.* 499e, *Phil.* 20d, *Men.* 77b.

The good is prior to the action; the agent can no longer decide whether he wants to strive for this goal, for he is always already oriented toward it as that of which he has at least an implicit notion.¹⁶ Here, purposes are not bound in the manner of a teleology operating, as it were, according to the laws of nature. It is a teleology that is mediated through the consciousness of the agent: the agent strives necessarily for what he holds to be the good; yet the possibility is never ruled out that he may thereby be caught in an error. Nevertheless, it is not possible to err voluntarily, and it is above all impossible knowingly to strive for a particular error or even merely to tolerate it. If therefore an error about the good is corrected, then simultaneously with this correction the alignment of the will is corrected. If one tolerates or strives for the mere appearance of the just, then even this is only possible if he holds it to be good to do this. Thus here too the teleological structure of action, in which action is directed toward the good, remains presupposed. The just or its appearance is then admittedly not the real goal, but only a means to reach this goal. Here is the systematically proper place for questions discussed by Plato even without explicit relationship to the assumption of ideas: For what reason should one prefer justice to injustice? What use is it for a person to be just? Is it better to suffer injustice than to commit it? Such questions cannot finally be answered if one determines the just only with the help of schemes of action and loses sight of the relationship to that good for the sake of which he gives preference to one action as opposed to another. Here it is a matter of that ultimate goal that no longer can be employed as a means. The agent cannot distance himself from such a goal because he has always already identified himself with it.

From this perspective, a new light falls upon the relationship that Plato establishes between the good and the useful. Namely, if something is useful if and only if it can be claimed as a means to the attainment of the good, then what is said about the good also holds correspondingly for the useful: One will always only choose what is useful or what he at least holds to be useful. One cannot want to employ for his goal a means the uselessness of which he knows. In this case one would in reality have striven for another goal. The teleological structure of all action here too provides the foundation. If it is here a matter of a teleology that is mediated through the consciousness of the agent, then, as already mentioned, the idea of a natural and purely objectively operating teleology is excluded. On the other hand, the agent is also not himself in a position to set the

¹⁶ *Rep.* 505c: ἀπομαντευομένη [sc. ψυχὴ] τι εἶναι. ([The soul] has divined that it is something.)

final goal of all behavior and freely to decide about it. The goal is prior to this despite the fact that one can find himself in error with regard to it. But for the agent himself, precisely for this reason, the good is never a part of an alternative that is available to him. One can just as little decide about the good as he can make the alternatives of truth and error, as such, the object of a decision. For one can never be conscious of a present error. Therefore the teleologically structured action is always oriented toward the good as goal and toward the usefulness of the means. These are the structural relations that form the foundation of both the Socratic proposition that all wrong-doing is involuntary and the Platonic project of political education.

Thus when it is said that in the case of the good no one tolerates mere appearance, then this does not mean that there is no such appearance. What is meant is that one can never strive for mere appearance in the realm of the good and useful. One can certainly fall victim to it, just as one can to an error. Insight into the idea of the good, therefore, also has the function of correcting errors and self-deceptions regarding the true goals and, to this extent, also regarding the means of each agent. Hence this insight is not merely of theoretical relevance for Plato. It has, in addition, the function of immediately motivating action. For he who is in possession of this insight can in principle no longer err about the usefulness of particular values and goods.

If this is correct, then the idea of the good also has the function of relating all goods and at the same time all knowledge back to the agent's and knower's person. For the usefulness conferred on all goods and all knowledge through the relation to the idea of the good is not related to an abstract supreme value or to an abstract principle. Rather it is a usefulness that is related to the agent and knower himself and to his true interests and goals. It is of course also no mere accident that, in the passage from which our considerations originated, it is stated that through the idea of the good everything else becomes useful *for us*.¹⁷ The reason for this is that no one can decide about his ultimate goals and interests because he has always already identified himself with them.

But how can Plato take into account the possibility that, when it is a matter of the just, one only strives for its appearance? Does this mean that the just, which is known with respect to its idea, can itself be understood instrumentally and, similarly to the unjust, be employed as a means to any goal whatsoever? There is no reason to attribute this to Plato. For the just which has not yet been made "use-

¹⁷ *Rep.* 505a: ἡμῶν ὄφελος, cf. 343b, 367d.

ful" through the relation to the idea of the good does not yet at all embody true justice. Here it is a matter of what, for instance, was represented in the allegory of the cave as the shadow of the just (*Rep.* 517d). There is also no concretization of the just that would realize justice alone and not always at the same time also injustice.¹⁸ But this means that every concrete action and concrete scheme of action necessarily remains ambivalent if one wants to claim that it is a model of the just. To be sure, such models can be instrumentalized; they can be employed again and again as means to various ends. But one can speak of real justice only when this ambivalence has been removed through the relation to the idea of the good. True justice is therefore always only "good" justice, which is no longer exposed to the danger of misuse. The correctly understood idea of justice cannot conclusively be presented in a formula or in a model of action. Rather, its knowledge proves itself in the ability to make correct use of such models of action with respect to the idea of the good in each situation.

IV

Plato never determines the content of the good itself. Initial steps that appear to go in this direction, even in the *Republic*, plainly have the sole intent of showing the hopelessness of such an attempt. Thus it is understandable that one can only work out functions that Plato requires of the idea of the good and of insight into it: First of all it characterizes the ultimate goal of all action, at the service of which the agent places all things if he grasps it correctly. Furthermore, on the basis of the teleological structure of all action, a structure in which action is mediated through consciousness, insight into this idea should also be able directly to motivate and regulate this action. Finally, insight into the idea of the good should also confer the ability to do justice to the particular case and the concrete situation. In modern terms, insight into the idea of the good has to bring forth achievements of practical reason as well as of practical judgment. He who is familiar with the pertinent systematic problems here will hardly wonder that Plato never provides a substantive determination of the idea of the good. This idea is not a norm that would prescribe, with a claim to universality, a certain behavior. Furthermore, nothing is said about how the idea of the good fulfills the functions attributed to it. Yet this too is easily understandable if one considers that the idea of the good does not at all have the categorial status of a rule; it is rather the point of reference with respect to which any

¹⁸ Compare *Rep.* 476a, 479a.

rules whatsoever are adequately applied.

Connected with this is the fact that the knowledge of the idea of the good in Plato is also never presented in the form of a proposition or system of propositions. This is certainly not due to the fact that Plato, as is occasionally assumed today, would have wanted to reserve this knowledge as an esoteric special doctrine intended for oral instruction within a smaller circle. No one would want to deny the existence of a Platonic oral tradition the contents of which are not also present in all detail in the dialogues. If one assumes, however, that what Plato withholds in the dialogues in an often very emphatic way were propositions reserved for oral communication, then this would be a gross misunderstanding. Plato's esoteric teaching is of another kind. It knows only open secrets. The extraordinarily cautious provisos with which the treatment of the idea of the good in the *Republic* is introduced make this clear: Socrates knows that he can give no adequate representation of the idea of the good. But nowhere does he let it be known that he is in possession of propositions that he merely withholds. One may assume that in essence he also actually says what can be said (*Rep.* 506df). If the knowledge of the idea of the good is not communicated in the form of propositions, then this is due to the fact that it cannot at all be confined to the form of a proposition. It transmits no information about the existence of states of affairs. Here one is indeed confronted with the much-discussed unspeakable. One should not, however, mystify this unspeakable — it does not belong in a fog of unclear emotions or experiences. Rather, a rationality of its own kind is appropriate to it. It is a matter of an insight that belongs less to a type of theoretical knowledge than to a type of practical ability. Practical ability in its more trivial forms, for instance, on the level of the technical skill of a trade — something that recurs again and again in the Socratic discourses — is already something unspeakable in a sense that can be made precise. It does not follow from this that no theoretical insights could be formulated and established about such an ability and its results. Yet this ability does not thereby become a theoretical insight. One can formulate justifiable propositions about all knowledge and every ability. But the ability does not at all thus need to be present in such propositions. It is not acquired by acquiring the knowledge found in the corresponding propositions, but is a knowledge that shows itself in an adequate dealing with things and in their use. It is transmitted by practice, not by theoretical instruction.

Nevertheless, the knowledge of the idea of the good also remains categorially different from the knowledge of a trade. For the comparison with artisans, even in Plato, is never stretched so far that the limitation to a specific subject area of the skill pertaining to a trade is

carried over in the characterization of the highest knowledge. But Plato sees that the theoretical knowledge present in propositions is also not self-sufficient. For even in respect to propositions that contain such knowledge there is need of an art of dealing with them and of using them. This art appears in Plato under the name of dialectic.

This dialectic, unlike the group of sciences exemplified in Plato by mathematics, does not have the goal of gaining and establishing true propositions about states of affairs. Thus, there are indeed mathematical propositions, but there are no dialectical propositions. There is only dialectic as the art of dealing with propositions of various kinds. In the analogy of the divided line, dialecticians and mathematicians, whose activities are assigned to the two superior segments, are not distinguished from each other by their subject area. The *intelligibilia* form the subject area in both cases. What is different is only the method of dealing with them (compare *Rep.* 510bff). The dialectician knows that the propositions formulated about such *intelligibilia* with the aid of sensible examples are not ultimate. He can make use of the propositions as means to ends, especially since he knows that a proposition never expresses the substance of all of that which he can attain in practical discourse. To this extent the dialectician in fact deals with the unspeakable. Yet this does not mean that he would have to leave the realm of propositions at any point. By skillfully dealing with propositions, he is led to insights that need not enter into propositions themselves. Such insights can assume, as in the Socratic practice of discussion portrayed in Plato, the form of a discussion partner's self-experience. There is also the experience of one's own ignorance, induced through the partner's purposeful guiding of the conversation. Experiences of this kind can be described with the help of propositions. But the knowledge of these propositions cannot replace experience.

Insight into the idea of the good is only the highest level of knowledge that is attainable with the help of the dialectical art. It is a knowledge the acquisition of which can indeed be prepared for by this art but not guaranteed by it. Namely, it is that knowledge which enables its possessor to deal with all other knowledge in the correct way. This also holds for the knowledge of the idea. The dialectician knows that the ideas are not ultimate entities about which there can be no further questioning. Precisely because of this he differs from the mathematician. But then the famous "doctrine of ideas", which is most closely connected with the name of Plato in the history of thought until today, is always only a structure oriented with respect to the standpoint of the mathematician. As a kind of meta-mathematics that leads to a useless doubting of reality, it has already been

rightly criticized by Aristotle. What was criticized in this way, however, was always only a doctrine of ideas without dialectic and so without relation to the idea of the good.

Plato's account of the idea of the good shows that, even with the help of the famous analogies, knowledge of it can never wholly enter into an objective form. Rather, the idea of the good marks that point from which the dealing with all formulatable knowledge in general must also be regulated if this knowledge is not to remain purposeless, disconnected, and useless for the knower. Herein lies a lasting contribution of Plato's account of the idea of the good. Plato has recognized the preliminary character of all objective knowledge, and has seen that the best theory and the best system of norms is of no use if there is a want of the practical ability, only acquired through long and deliberate practice, of dealing with these things in a useful way, that is, a way serving the true goals of the agent and knower.

THE POSSIBILITY OF RATIONALLY ESTABLISHING NORMS AND THE SO-CALLED "VALUE-FREEDOM" OF THE SCIENCES*

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Translated by Robert M. Wallace

I. "Politics doesn't belong in the lecture-hall": Higher education and civic competence

Twice in this century the so-called "value-freedom" of the sciences has been the theme of violent arguments among intellectuals, and these arguments have had far-reaching influence in the realm of political ideology. On the first occasion, shortly after the end of the First World War, these arguments were ignited by Max Weber's famous or infamous speech on "Science as a Vocation". The argument sprang up a second time in the nineteen sixties — initially in the debates of the fifteenth Congress of German Sociologists, held in Heidelberg in 1964, and then, of course (in the context of the still recent academic cultural revolution), as the well-known so-called "Positivism debate in German sociology", between representatives of "critical rationalism", on the one side, and "critical theory", on the other. In this second episode Max Weber again played the role of the classic author of the demand for value-freedom in the sciences and was the most important representative of the doctrine that rational argument for general rules governing human action, that is to say, the rational establishment of norms, cannot be the business of science! I do not propose to contribute anything here to the history of these debates. I propose to proceed directly to the substance of the matter, and to begin with suggest that there is general agreement that science, as we

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practice it, is as a matter of course not a value-free activity. Three points may be sufficient to make this clear.

1. The sciences as we practice them are institutionally and, in the end, also financially dependent upon the culturally and politically dominant estimate of their value. They too have to legitimize themselves, for example by appeal to their relevance or to human curiosity, and they find it necessary to mobilize their legitimacy — that is, their public value — in the "politics of science".

2. The selection, indeed even the constitution of the objects of scientific theory-formation, are also dependent upon value orientations. From gerontology all the way to archaeology — not to mention the social sciences and jurisprudence — research is manifestly guided by value-conceptions which are widely shared in our culture.

3. Finally, the sciences are also subject to normative regulation in regard to their methods. Rules of inference, rules governing the distribution of the burden of proof, modes of experimental procedure, norms of definition — all of these have the character of prescriptions governing the practical activity of science, observation of which is in fact protected by sanctions within the community of scientists.

So it seems that people have rightly subjected the thesis of the so-called "value-freedom" of the sciences to critical condemnation, and it appears that those are not in the wrong who direct against Max Weber and other "positivists" (a term that today is usually applied to them with a critical intent) the reproach that anyone who wishes to bind scientists to value-freedom in their scientific activity only promotes their predisposition to deliver themselves up, uncritically and decisionistically,¹ to any and every political-ideological movement.

I see the situation differently. I assume that those who have defended the so-called "value-freedom" of the sciences did not, of course, mean to deny the obvious value-dependencies that I have just enumerated in three short paragraphs. But what *did* they mean? My initial undertaking in this paper will be to show what they meant by means of an interpretation of Weber's demand that science and politics should be kept separate from one another both methodologically and institutionally. Weber's principle that "politics does not belong in the lecture-hall"¹ is a representative formulation of this demand, and it is a principle that I propose to defend. Following that I shall attempt to answer the question whether norms governing action are at all capable of being established rationally (and hence, in appropriate cases, scientifically). I shall give an affirmative answer to this question and at the same time show by example how we actually

¹ See *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 145.

proceed when we establish norms rationally. Finally, I shall present an attempt at a reconstruction of pragmatism, with the specific purpose of showing why it is not possible to make political action in general dependent on the result of discourses aimed at the rational establishment of norms.

First of all, then, I have to explain the rational, defensible meaning of the demand that the sciences be kept value-free by being kept separate from political practice. In my view the principle I've quoted, that "politics does not belong in the lecture-hall", and thus also the thesis that it is necessary to keep science and politics separate institutionally, is correct, and my argument for this position is as follows.

1. Of course, the principle that "politics does not belong in the lecture-hall" does not mean that politics should not be a subject of scientific investigation. The fact is, that political events are continually being analyzed and described by science. Political science exists; political sociology exists, and Max Weber himself was one of its most important founders. So it is obvious that the meaning of Weber's famous or infamous principle is not that one should not establish such sciences in the university or that one should expell them from it.

2. The principle that "politics does not belong in the lecture-hall" is a political requirement, more specifically a requirement of the politics of higher education. It is founded on an elementary distinction, the distinction between establishing facts, on the one hand, and taking positions on practical political questions, on the other.

3. Max Weber drew this distinction between establishing facts and taking positions on practical political questions strictly and vigorously. What is the meaning of this distinction? To begin with, science and politics are, methodically and institutionally, in an elementary way different types of action. It may be sufficient if I characterize the second of these types of action, politics, in a way which will be appropriate to our context here: Politics is the art of producing a readiness to assent, by means of which one constructs power combinations (which in parliamentary systems primarily means majorities) that make it possible to accomplish practical goals, to make norms politically obligatory, and to render value-orientations effective in the public sphere. This characterization of politics makes it evident that science, as the practice of investigating the conditions of reality of even political action itself, represents an entirely different type of action. But of course this is not yet enough to show that one should not carry on both types of activity in the institutions where science is practiced, that is, above all, in the universities. One understands this further point when one goes on to develop the institutional as-

pect of Weber's distinction between establishing facts, on the one hand, and taking positions on practical political questions, on the other. It turns out that scientific action and political action each require entirely different, highly specific forms of organization, the confusion and mixture of which inevitably results in functional disorders. Thus the purpose of this requirement is not to keep them artificially separate, but to provide for each of them the optimal institutional conditions. The not unusual, and generally grotesque confusion between the lecture platform and the orator's rostrum benefits neither science nor politics.

4. Of course there is at least one special type of political practice in which the individual and collective practitioners of science must always be ready to engage along with their scientific practice, namely the politics involved in securing and improving the material and legal preconditions of scientific activity itself. It is precisely in this sense that Max Weber's speech on "Science as a Vocation" is itself a political speech directed against the functionally dangerous mixture of two types of action that have radically different prerequisites in terms of organizational technique.

5. So the principle that "politics does not belong in the lecture-hall" does not gain its validity from, for example, the fact that (as people say) value-judgements are made in politics whereas science is value-free. The practice of science is also value-oriented in several respects, as was said at the beginning, and if Max Weber nevertheless demands value-freedom for science, then it follows that the words "value-freedom" here have a very specific meaning. What Max Weber is referring to is a trivial but — for the practice of science — exceedingly important standing norm. The requirement of value-freedom means that the positive or negative value of that which is under investigation must not be allowed to influence our practical scientific efforts to establish what in fact is the case. It is easy to say that this is to be taken for granted. But the painful history of the dependence of the sciences on politics teaches us otherwise. Let me demonstrate this by a relatively harmless example. A Bavarian member of the *Bundestag* said a number of years ago that even a hundred tons of sociological literature could not alter his belief in the deterrent effect of the death penalty. In this way he expressed the fact that to that extent he was not prepared to engage in the value-free establishment of facts. Max Weber's well-founded suspicion was that even scientists themselves, as soon as they begin to admit the intensity of their political conviction as a measure of their virtue in the performance of their professorial duties, become resistant to reality and atrophied in their capacity to establish facts in an unprejudiced manner. The Lysenkoist biology of Stalin's times or the invention of a "German phy-

sics" in the Nazi era would be weighty examples of the existence of this phenomenon in the history of science in this century. There are less weighty examples in the present as well, but, out of consideration for the individuals concerned, I prefer not to go into the details of these here.

The Weberian requirement that politics and science should, in the interests of both, be kept separate in the manner I have explained has an important consequence. It entails the recognition that participation in the life of the sciences, and in particular the study of the sciences at a university, is not suited to educating us to overall civic competence. To what end, then, is such study suited? I would like to give two answers to this question.

1. To begin with, academic and scientific institutions are places where specialists are trained. It seems to me that this must remain the dominant aspect. Instrumental reason is what, primarily, the citizenry wants to see its academic intelligentsia acquiring in its expensive educational institutions, because it is this instrumental reason — the rationality of the specialist — that the citizen wants to be able to rely on in his role as patient, as litigant, as airplane passenger. This instrumental reason is what we need in order to ensure the rationality of our actions in our "scientific civilization". Our actions are, after all, rational only to the extent that the assumptions about reality on which they must always be based are well-grounded and secure. Since in complex, scientifically sub-structured life-situations "common sense" is no longer an adequate final authority for the assumptions about reality on which we base our actions, we must make up for this inadequacy by having recourse to the scientifically disciplined knowledge of specialists. It is this knowledge that we citizens, in our multifarious life-situations, increasingly either use ourselves or (alternatively) expect specialists to provide — these being persons upon whom we must, to this extent, rely. Our academic institutions would be very poorly advised if they recommended their graduates to the citizenry which finances them by, say, their capacity for critique and not, rather, above all by their competence in dealing with specialized subject matter. Admittedly the narrow specialist ("*Fach-idiot*") is not an ideal. But the competent specialist is. It is true that to be a specialist is not enough. But it is not true that participation in academic life is especially suited to providing us with what we need over and above competence in a specialty, namely, civic competence, the capacity for moral and political judgement. To say it once more: we must have recourse to specialized scientific competence today, not just in private but also in civic life, more than ever before. It is this competence that, above all, our academic training institutions give us the opportunity to acquire. Of course the academic in-

stitutions themselves, as corporate bodies, require for their administration and self-management not only specialized competencies but also public spirit, and the capacity for practical judgement as well. These can also be developed through participation in this administration and self-management. Many a political career, as we know, has begun in student government, and he who as a student is a member of the executive board of a student service institution also has access to a fountainhead of experience. It advances political maturity to learn that in this situation an appropriate contribution to making the world a better place is an improvement in the quality of food served in the *Mensa*. In the student council it is an extension of the hours that the library is open that counts. Still, the pressure of reality that the institutional side of academic life is able to exercise on young academic citizens is altogether too slight to allow us to hope for the birth of public spirit from the spirit of higher education. Finally, it would be utterly absurd to imagine that there are specialized sciences that can convey to us in a form of theory the capacity for political judgment that we as physicists or technicians cannot acquire through our particular course of study. By studying medicine we become physicians, and by studying sociology or political science, citizens. Nonetheless — as improbable as this sounds — many responsible people, even in politics and administration, have in recent years assumed <the opposite> and this has been articulated in a fair number of curricula. Not a few students have been victims of this delusion. Rather than functioning as solidly educated specialists in the social sciences, such persons today operate — in social service professions, among others — as pseudocritical and ineffective agents of social change and are a burden to themselves and to their institutions.

2. Beyond specialized competence, upon which we today more than ever before, with regard to our social relations, rely, we can expect from scientific education in particular a contribution toward a consolidation in the culture of what I would like to call an "ethic of rational argument". I want to explain in a few sentences what I mean by this. According to the rules by which we distribute the burden of proof, the person who asserts something publicly accepts this burden for his assertion. In our time, a time of the blossoming of comprehensive ideologies, we have special need, politically, of being sensitized to the burden of proof that falls to one who makes large assertions. Now in the academic ideal it is precisely education through science that is suited to generating this increased sensitivity. Education through science: its cultural effect is a capacity for scepticism, resistance to rhetoric, a refusal to be stupefied. It is a question of the development of a culture of rationality which has moral and political significance, and it is clear what aspect of the

sciences is especially suited to contributing to its consolidation. It is the sciences precisely in what we usually call their "positivistic" aspect — the sciences as Max Weber described them. This is not the place to go into the complex fortunes of the concept of positivism. Once we have freed ourselves from fear of the word "positivistic" there is nothing even in the history of the concept to prevent us from seeing the so-called "positivistic" sciences as distinguished by the fact that in them the constitution of theoretical assumptions with regard to what is the case is kept independent of the political interests of the individual and collective practitioners of these sciences. Such science, for the ethic of which Max Weber is, then, the most important classic author, makes one unpolitical and hence liable to be led astray politically — so runs the familiar accusation. This accusation has no basis in reality. In fact, historical justice requires us to state that from jurisprudence to the theory of the sciences, the representatives of so-called "positivism" in Germany and in Austria were anything but academic partisans of National Socialism; rather, they were proscribed by it and in some cases were even its victims. The explanation of this fact is as follows: the culture of rationality that one gains by participating in the practice of the <positivistic> sciences and by adopting the basic principles of their specific scientific ethic sensitizes one against great assertions, and that in itself makes the representatives of such a culture intolerable to great political ideologies, which after all live by great assertions. It is not the scientific ethic that Max Weber taught which made the German universities suitable locations for the manifestation of the "engagement" of academics on the side of National Socialism. On the contrary, it was precisely the weakness of the academic recognition of that ethic which had this result. An analogous statement holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the contemporary academic situation. Naturally it is true that a culture of rationality as a practical consciousness of burdens of proof and their distribution, a scientific ethic that obliges one not to be influenced by politics when one is engaged in theory-construction, is not sufficient as a practical basis for politically stable scientific and academic institutions. For these institutions, like others, owe their life, in the final analysis, to the liveliness of a public will which relates to the totality of our shared community, within which the academic and scientific institutions have their specific position. The fact is simply that this public will, in its comprehensive political substance and culture, does not have its primary social locus in scientific institutions. No doubt academic citizens, in keeping with the professional and social privileges that are usually associated with academic qualifications, are especially expected to live up to the moral and political responsibilities of civic life; but the expectations that are in fact (to that extent) addressed to academically educated

people do not relate to a moral and political culture of a specifically academic sort, but rather, simply, to the culture of our shared community as a whole. This culture is not specifically academic; nevertheless, its demands also extend into the academic communities. But, once again, these communities are not specially favored locations for training in the political culture of the overall community. This does not prevent them from making their own contribution to this culture, namely — to repeat — through, on the one hand, the development of specialized competence, and, on the other hand, the culture of rationality which is gained through participation in the life of the sciences.

However, experts in reflection on goals — political scouts, pointers of the ideological way, openers of utopian horizons — are precisely not what the citizenry expects the members of academic communities to be. To put it another way: academics, as graduates of institutions of scientific education, are ideally experts in the solution of regulatory crises, on the one hand, and possessors of a capacity to judge the legitimacy of truth-claims, on the other. But experts in the solution of orientation- and goal-setting-crises they certainly are not, and the idea is somehow intolerable that one should have to submit one's political judgment to scientists as experts in political program-matics. The dominance of technical experts, who do in any case understand their own technical business, would then be replaced by that of experts on political and moral goals. But in contrast to this, democratic communities are defined precisely by the fact that in them no one is acknowledged as an expert where moral and political goals are concerned. A homely example from ancient political philosophy puts it this way: in regard to the art of shoemaking we laymen certainly can not teach the shoemaker anything; but it is not the shoemaker's job to decide whether his shoe fits us.

II. Science and the rational Establishment of Norms

Recently a German philosophy department invited an array of philosophers and methodologists of the social sciences to address themselves to the question of whether there can be a method for the rational establishment of norms. I don't deny that there are aspects of this question that cannot be settled on the basis of common sense alone. On the other hand, the question at issue here is clearly one that owes its apparent relevance to the presumption that there are people who doubt the existence of a method for the rational establishment of norms. It is a question that derives from the ongoing "value judgment debate" (*Werturteilssstreit*) and is intended as a challenge to those who are thought to regard value judgments, or more specifically norms (in other words, universal rules governing actions)

as formations which are not constituted by rational means and which the sciences, consequently, cannot be expected to provide either. Familiar as it is from this point of view, our question whether there can be a method for the rational establishment of norms is, however, liable to arouse the suspicion in the exoteric public that philosophers and methodologists of the social sciences who ask such questions may be suffering from an academically induced loss of contact with reality. Is there a method for the rational establishment of norms? How can anyone ask such a question? It is after all plain that from parliaments to supreme courts and from party congresses to synods, authoritative bodies are constantly engaged — following tested and customary rules, in other words, employing a method — in rationally establishing norms, that is, general policies or statutes, which are then binding for everyone in the area to which they apply. Generally norms are given validity in society by virtue of the concurrence of duly constituted majorities, and it is reasonable to assume that these majorities would not have bestowed their approval if they did not consider the norms in question to be well justified. To that extent one can also assume that for the public opinion in the context of which such majorities are formed it is a trivial axiom that norms can be justified methodically.

The subsequent question, how it is, then, that norms are in fact established rationally, in a way that requires assent, is also exoterically a question with no dramatic significance. It is after all a central constituent fact of our public political culture that as a citizen one knows what obligations, in terms of rational argument, are undertaken by any member of a competent body who proposes that a norm should be introduced, and beyond that one also knows the procedures for putting norms into effect. Here I have already touched on the distinction that will concern us in more detail in what follows, namely the simple distinction between the process of justifying a norm rationally and the process of gaining effective assent to it, or putting it into effect. He who proposes the introduction of a norm must provide a rational justification for it, and no parliament would accept a bill from the government or from a party in the parliament that was not accompanied by such a rational justification. But even the methodically most unexceptionable justification of a norm, which guarantees the norm's validity on the cognitive plane, does not after all by itself bring about the validity of the norm in society. This never emerges except as the result of an institutional process of putting the norm into effect, a process of which the rational justification is never more than a part.

Now of course it is undeniably true that rational justifications of norms, such as can be found, for instance, in the speeches given at

the introduction of bills in parliaments, often exhibit gaps. It is less often the case that no one notices this fact and that even political opponents fail to criticize it. Fortunately the common case of gaps in rational justifications that no one objects to occurs above all when no one is inclined to oppose from the outset the proposal that a norm be introduced, so that to that extent nothing depends on the greater or lesser thoroughness of the explicit justification. If something does depend on it, because it is needed in order to bring about understanding and agreement that are not yet present, then naturally the bill's sponsors cannot afford to leave gaps in the justification. If such gaps nevertheless occur, then the reason is usually not that the methodical, procedural requirements for the justification of a norm are unknown or have gaps of their own. Instead, objective difficulties are present which hinder us in our attempt to fulfill the well-known and recognized requirements of norm-justification. In many cases we do not succeed in entirely closing certain gaps in our knowledge of the reality on which our proposed norm is based, and, for example, our prognoses about social behavior, which lead us to expect desirable consequences from action governed by the proposed norm, turn out to be unreliable. At this point it is not the rules that we follow in the practice of justifying norms that require revision, but rather the assumptions about reality which we bring to bear in the course of following those rules.

In summary, then, what I am saying is that in the exoteric context of the numerous proceedings, by which we are continually affected, of putting norms into effect, we do in fact encounter, again and again, gaps in the justifications that are provided; but there is no dispute about what fundamental requirements a justification for a norm must satisfy.

Then why do people question whether norms can be established rationally, and what (insofar as they are possible) norm-justifications would have to accomplish? Of course the fact that such doubts are not prevalent in parliamentary practice or in the activity of party platform committees need not be a reason for philosophers to abstain from posing pertinent questions in their own esoteric circles. Philosophy does not deal only with questions that have already long since been raised outside the boundaries of its scientific discipline. It also raises questions for purposes of criticism, to aid in the elimination of deficiencies which would not even have been noticed in the absence of these questions. But merely to question what no one else questions and what also cannot be shown to be questionable would be idle.

Where then in our public life are the deficiencies that force us to put in question the methodology of our practice of establishing

norms? Trivially, we are subject to many norms which are in more or less urgent need of change, replacement, or abolition. But that does not prove that our practice of establishing norms is in a bad way. A sufficient explanation for a situation of this type is that we have learned more in the meantime about what is the case, or that circumstances have changed. Changes in norms will be in order as a result of these changes.

In such cases there is much to complain about, but not because the method we employ in our practice of establishing norms is in a bad way. What I assert is that this is in fact our situation. If this assertion is correct, then the question arises, how could the possibility of a method for the rational establishment of norms ever have become a problem for contemporary philosophy? As far as I can see, from an exoteric point of view the primary occasion for this is a literary one. It is not an evident inadequacy in the public process of establishing norms that provokes the current efforts aimed at a methodological reconstruction of this practice. What provokes them are the actual or supposed assertions of philosophers or other intellectuals that norms are not capable of methodologically rational justification. An additional interpretative assumption is that at least some of the imperfections of social conditions and of political practice that have affected and continue to affect us and other people could be the result of a practical orientation toward the assertion that norms are not capable of methodologically rational justification.

Naturally it is Max Weber who in this context plays the role of the classic author of a theory that declares that a rational justification of norms, analogous to the rational justification of assertions about reality, is impossible, and that accordingly traces the political validation of norms back to the decisions of those who possess power. There are in fact statements of Weber's that seem to belong to such a theory. I would like to quote here one of the most often quoted statements of this sort. I quote, from Max Weber's exposition of the meaning of the "value-freedom" of the social sciences, the statement in which he addresses the question "how conflicts between several concretely conflicting (intended or obligatory) ends are to be arbitrated". The terrible statement reads: "There is no (rational or empirical) scientific procedure of any kind whatsoever which can provide us with a decision here."²

Now that is a statement that seems to verify unambiguously the reproach that Max Horkheimer, among other critics, has been particularly influential in directing at Weber's philosophy. In this philosophy, according to Horkheimer, reason abdicates the role of "prac-

² Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. Edward Shils and Henry Finch (New York: Free Press, 1949), p. 19.

tical reason" and continues as "instrumental reason" only. According to Horkheimer, Max Weber was unable to conceive of "any sort of rationality by means of which man can distinguish one goal from another". His works attest to the resignation of "philosophy and science from their effort to determine the end [*das Ziel*, the *telos*, the defining purpose] of man"³ Jürgen Habermas later augmented this interpretation of Weber with the personalizing characterization that "Carl Schmitt was a legitimate student of Max Weber"⁴

Now I am not concerned here to vindicate Max Weber against such charges. If one wanted to enter into a discussion of this problem one would also have to raise the question whether and to what extent a person can be held responsible for misunderstandings that he has generated. What I do intend to show is that Max Weber is misunderstood when he is understood in the way suggested by the pertinent interpretations both of the Frankfurt School and of the Erlangen School.

I want to show that Max Weber's thesis regarding the unfitness of science for bringing about a decision in situations where norms are in conflict is perfectly compatible with the thesis that norms can be established by rational means. If what I have asserted here, against philosophy and in agreement with bourgeois "common sense", namely, that norms are continually being rationally established in our public life without question or complaint, is in fact the case — then Max Weber can hardly have overlooked this fact. It is true that he was a philosopher, but he was not a philosopher who transcended reality. How then could Max Weber go on to make the assertion that I have quoted? How could he assert that there is "no (rational or empirical) scientific procedure of any kind whatsoever" which in cases of politically conflicting goals could yield a decision? This question, it turns out, can be rendered manageable with the help of the distinction, which was already mentioned earlier on, between the process of justifying a norm rationally and the process of putting one into effect. This distinction corresponds precisely to an ambiguity which is easily overlooked in the meaning of the phrase "to be valid", when we speak of norms being valid. What "is valid" here on the one hand is norms to the extent that they are well-justified rationally. On the other hand norms are valid to the extent that they have achieved a status of being effectively binding in society. In the first case one might say that norms are "objectively" (*der Sache nach*) valid, or,

³ Max Horkheimer, *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft* (Frankfurt/Main, 1967), pp. 17f.

⁴ *Max Weber und die Soziologie heute*, Verhandlungen des 15. Deutschen Soziologentages, ed. by Otto Stammer and Rolf Ebbinghausen (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1965), p. 81.

where the context of the derivation of the propositions justifying them is concerned, logically valid. In the second case they are valid in society. The process of rationally justifying a norm takes care of the first kind of validity; the process of putting it into effect takes care of the second. The two processes are inseparable, but they are always distinguishable. That holds even for the special case of norm-pedagogy. It is true that moral education only achieves its goal when the pupil follows the norm which he is expected to follow on account of recognition of the good reasons which support the norm. However, ever since the sacrifice of Isaac, and the Hessian guidelines for social studies instruction to the contrary notwithstanding, no moral education is rational which does not include education in the capacity to orient one's action in appropriate cases in accordance with norms that are at the moment valid in society even though their rational justification is obscure or clearly inadequate. This rule gains its force from the fact that the integrity of the procedure for putting norms into effect is in general more important for the society than is the firmness of the rational justification of a norm which was put into effect in society in a procedurally correct fashion. This is also precisely the legitimizing basis of the principle of majority rule. The validity of the principle of majority rule in parliamentary and other analogous processes of gaining effective assent to norms presupposes a readiness to acknowledge the validity of norms in society independently of whether one is also able to assent to these norms on account of their rational justification. This is precisely what Luhmann means by what he describes as procedural legitimation.⁵

Now nothing more than the distinctions that have just been made explicit is needed in order to reconstrue Max Weber's famous or infamous thesis that science is unfit for normative decisions in cases of goals that conflict in reality. It seems to me that Max Weber's thesis becomes plausible when one relates it to difficulties in the process of gaining effective assent to norms.

"There is", says Weber's thesis in the formulation we have cited, "no (rational or empirical) scientific procedure of any kind whatsoever which can provide us with a decision here". In what case? In the case of the existence in politics of a conflict "between several concretely conflicting (intended or obligatory) ends". From the point of view of an explicit distinction between the process of justifying a norm rationally and the process of successfully putting it into effect, Max Weber's thesis becomes plausible. Let us assume the simple exemplary case in which the "conflicting ends" are the "intended or obligatory" purposes of two or more parties to assert and

⁵ Niklas Luhmann, *Legitimation durch Verfahren* (Darmstadt: Neuwied, 1975).

to exercise rights which if they are exercised by everyone will destroy the things whose existence gives the rights their value. The competition of several countries in whale-hunting in the Antarctic has precisely this structure, and up to the present the resulting conflict has yet to be definitively resolved. In regard to some of the species in question that are hunted there is hope that it may yet be possible to resolve the conflict before it is too late. Is there a "scientific procedure of any kind whatsoever which can provide us with a decision here"? Anyone who answers this question in the affirmative is simply confusing the relevant process of justifying the long-established norm which would save the endangered species, a norm which would make it the duty of all participants to restrict themselves to the kill quotas that would protect those species, with the political process of putting this norm into effect in society by means of multilateral international agreements. In this case too the appropriate rational norm-justification is of course a constituent part of the process of bringing about the norm's social validity, that is, its embodiment in international treaties. Ecological problems have, after all, had international publicity for more than half a decade now, and popular zoology programs with their continual appeals for protection of wildlife are among the most universally popular television programs. In such times any intelligent child of television could tell the whole world the rational justification of the norm whose observation would resolve the conflict, save the astonishing sea mammals from extinction and provide us for the foreseeable future with moderate amounts of whale oil for use in nutrition and lubrication, as well as ambergris for making perfume. Beyond this, the manifold special aspects of the problem are well-known to the biological and oceanographic fishery experts, and they continue to be investigated. In fact, whole international research fleets are fitted out for the purpose. There is no lack of professional memoranda, prepared for presentation at conferences, and these are printed in the conference proceedings. But up to the present the long-recognized norm that would save the endangered species has still not been officially agreed upon and put into effect.

So the situation is precisely what I suggested initially: gaps in the process of justifying the norm are not the problem here at all, and even the procedurally correct justification itself, as far as I can judge as a layman, exhibits no material deficiencies leading to insufficiently secure assumptions about the supposed reality. The problem is solely in the procedure for gaining effective assent to the norm, and it is evident how little the correct justification of the norm, which is part of that procedure, is able by itself to alter that situation. This is exactly what Max Weber was pointing out to us as a warning against

the foolish hopes of many scientists. What is being deferred is a decision which would turn a well-known, fully justified and to that extent ("objectively" and logically) valid norm into a norm having validity in society.

I do not see what objection can be brought against the thesis of Max Weber's that I have already quoted three times, when it is interpreted in terms of this distinction. So as to exhibit the simple conclusiveness that it gains when it is understood in this way I now quote it one final, fourth time: "There is no (rational or empirical) scientific procedure of any kind whatsoever which can provide us with a decision here."

So the validity of a norm which is established by its rational justification is not identical with its validity in society, and the former is also in general not suited to bringing about the latter without further ado. The hiatus which we have as a result to deal with is not, as will be seen, the hiatus between "is" and "ought", with which we are so familiar from the discussions on this subject since David Hume, but rather — to put it on a comparable plane of generality — the hiatus between "ought" and "will", with which we have been so familiar since the time of Socrates. What they ought to will is after all well-known to all parties involved in our exemplary case. It is just that they don't yet will it in such a way as to agree to put it into effect, and it is precisely at this point that the art of the scientific expert in the rational justification of norms has its limit. Of course in principle there is nothing to prevent him, after doing his job well as an expert in norm-justification, from turning (impelled by the power of the arguments he has laid out) to involvement as an expert in gaining effective assent to norms and slipping into the role of the pedagogue, publicist or politician. This is frequently done, sometimes even successfully, and Max Weber's own biography provides evidence that science and politics, although in our society these are two separate vocations, can within certain limits, at least at times, be pursued as a double vocation. However, this will never be the rule, and we all have before us examples in which the attempt to go to the length of actually setting up an obligation for every scientist to pursue both vocations has had in part ridiculous, in part institutionally destructive, effects. This obligation had already been proclaimed once before in Germany, during the First World War, and innumerable politicizing professors obeyed it in the well-known publicistic acts by which they documented their political *engagement*, so as to bear witness that they knew what they were obligated to do and accordingly willed it and were in fact doing it.

I think there is no question that Weber's sarcastic description of the devastating consequences of the downfall of the distinction be-

tween the process of justifying norms rationally and the process of gaining effective assent to them would also be appropriate to numerous instances in the most recent short-circuiting of science and politics in the politics of higher education. I do not mean to suggest by this statement that the process of justifying norms rationally — which by the way I do consider a scientific activity — is incompatible with political activity aimed at achieving validity for the corresponding norms in society. My opinion is, rather, that the particular civic responsibility of experts in the rational justification of norms is in general fulfilled precisely by their competent performance in that role. That is the role assigned to them procedurally within the context of the process by which effective assent to norms is achieved. In all but extraordinary situations, only a contribution to the disruption of the process of putting the appropriate norm into effect would be achieved if an expert in the rational justification of norms suddenly, rather than presenting his rational arguments persuasively, flung accusations at the Soviets, the Japanese, at all the parties involved, to the effect that they still weren't doing what they clearly ought to be doing, namely agreeing on and henceforth obeying the rationally established catch quotas.

But shouldn't the rational justification of a norm, when it is acknowledged, of itself carry with it the validity of that norm in society? It would be nice if it did, and the demand that it should is a legitimate one. But it is after all only another form of the long familiar demand that we should will to do that which we ought to do. The hiatus between these has been our problem since the time of Socrates. Even Plato, who refused to tolerate it, had to seek the solution to the problem of closing it in procedures for gaining effective assent to norms, that is, in institutions. His institutional solution to this problem was the amalgamation of the institutions devoted to the rational justification of norms with those devoted to gaining effective assent to them, that is, the amalgamation of the Academy with the Republic. This is not the place to discuss how it is that such attempts to short-circuit, procedurally, the gap between the rational justification of norms and the achievement of effective assent to them, lead towards educational dictatorship and even greater terror than that. It is sufficient to note that the hiatus between "ought" and "will" does in fact gape wide in social reality, in order to understand that it makes sense to establish specialized procedures for gaining effective assent to norms, these being procedures that are more than lecture platforms and pulpits from which to deliver rational norm-justifications that are expected to have an irresistible impact on the will. Rules of order, by-laws, indeed the whole apparatus of parliamentarism are such procedures for putting

norms into effect. These are procedures which presuppose that reports providing justifications which are as clear as daylight do not always bring about active agreement in practice, so that it is rational, after speeches and discussions aimed at the rational establishment of norms, to take a vote about what should have validity in society and to equip the valid outcome of the vote with the usual sanctions to ensure obedience. Knowing that in the majority of cases the maladies of social life are caused not by inadequacies in our procedure for rationally justifying norms but rather by the lack of appropriate procedures for gaining effective assent to them, Max Weber made the latter the preferred subject of his political sociology.

Now this attempt at reconstruing Weber's thesis on this subject with the help of the distinction between the objective or logical validity of norms and their validity in society has still done nothing to answer the question as to how norms can be rationally justified. This need not be a serious fault if what I suggested to begin with is correct, namely that the procedure for justifying a norm rationally, unlike those for gaining effective assent to a norm and for putting it into effect, is unproblematic.

Is it? To answer this question we should now present and analyze a rich and representative sample of successfully accomplished rational justifications of norms, with reference, for example, to parliamentary records or similar documents. In the interest of brevity I will restrict myself to specifying the general schema in accordance with which rational justifications of norms are in fact accomplished in our public life. I describe this schema in a way that leaves me open to the objection that I have only described a schema for the rational justification of norms for technical action. I will return to this objection later. The schema, then, is as follows:

1. One establishes the existence of a shared desire, something that all participants in the process are agreed to want.

2. One describes conditions in reality that clearly do not accord with what everyone is agreed to want.

3. On the basis of theories about the effects of actions one specifies those actions that would be suited to changing conditions in such a way that they would accord with what everyone is agreed to want.

4. One formulates the norm which if it were put into effect would direct everyone involved to act accordingly.

That is really so simple and transparent that it is not even necessary to demonstrate its functioning in examples of actual rational justifications, especially of universal obligations under public law — from the obligations under law of waterways to provide for drainage, to the universal obligation, for example, for hunters to carry liability insurance.

However, the schema I have sketched presupposes a case where one can appeal to an agreed-upon desire as a point of departure. Now it has once again become customary, following certain remarks of Aristotle's, to say that a norm which governs actions by the goal of subjecting existing things to our agreed-upon desires is "technical", while the really interesting case is that of the justification of "practical" norms. In this line of thought norms are regarded as "practical" which, in cases where there is a conflict of wills on the part of participants in the discussion, prescribe action of a kind that involves a change in their wills which resolves the conflict.

Now the distinction between dissention and consensus of wills is indeed an important one, and in accordance with it there is a difference between cases in which we are trying to bring about a consensus in a situation where there is a conflict of wills, and those in which we are doing what accords with our agreed-upon, shared will. Politics, as the art of bringing about agreement, and technique, as the art of making feasible what we want when such agreement has been reached, are distinguished from one another in this way. What I fail to see, however, is how this affects the structure of the rational justification of norms. For if in fact there is any (coerced or spontaneous) readiness, on the part of those whose wills differ to the point of conflict, to resolve the conflict by coming to terms rather than by a test of strength, then the only possible means by which to come to such terms is to go back to a higher-level shared will, which the conflict of wills, if it cannot be overcome, will have the effect of impeding. But that is again precisely the usual point of departure of the general procedure for justifying norms which I have already sketched, by following which the prevailing conflict of wills can be overcome and, as a result, the higher-level shared will with which the conflict interferes can be implemented. The conflict between the whale-hunting nations which I sketched as an example has exactly this structure. Their conflict arises from the present desire of each to take so much prey that as an unintended consequence the other parties, which is to say ultimately all parties, will soon lack the opportunity to continue in this manner. The norm which would resolve the conflict, which requires universal observance of catch quotas that are designed to save the endangered species, is rationally justifiable, as will be seen — in accordance with the schema I have sketched — only by starting with the higher-level shared desire to be able to continue to catch whales in the future. This norm, like any norm, is "technical" to the extent that it is equipped to play the role of indicating what the parties must do in order to be able to do what they want to do. There is nothing to be gained by an extensive account of the reasons why in the exemplary case of whale-hunting there have been difficulties in

gaining effective assent to the norm in spite of the successful, in fact comparatively straightforward and unproblematic, rational justification of the norm. Briefly, the situation is that if the norm was finally made valid in society it would by that very fact provoke new, analogous conflicts in other areas of action, for example a conflict with those whose entirely legitimate interest in amortizing the whale-hunting fleets or in conserving jobs for the sea-going residents of otherwise economically unviable regions is incompatible with the norm of reduced catch quotas. So here there begins again, on a higher level, the problem of rationally justifying new, higher-level norms, and again, as always, in order to be able to resolve it we would have to find in existence an agreed-upon higher-level shared will. For only then could we say what is required of everyone in order that all can do what they are agreed to want to do, that is, for example, in the last resort to live well and in peace. And it would even be possible to formulate a norm of last resort related to this will of last resort, a "basic norm", as people say nowadays, which would then relate to the will of last resort (as we described it) in the way we have sketched.

Now from the history of practical philosophy we know several propositions that could be taken as formulations of this basic norm. Today also philosophers are at liberty to formulate "basic norms" to which one would have to return as the last resort in this process of the progressive resolution of conflicts. One could then reasonably write down, following Wilhelm Kamlah, the statement that "Everyone must bear in mind at all times the fact that his fellow human beings are creatures of necessity like himself, and must act accordingly".⁶ What is practically accomplished by writing this down can be seen with the help of the distinction between objective validity and validity in society: what is well justified rationally does not for that reason automatically get effective assent. The case of this basic norm seems, in this regard, to be one in which there exists no procedure for gaining effective assent to it which would be more than the process of presenting examples of obedience to it without any certainty that everyone will follow these examples. There is also nothing that prevents the didactic dissemination of the rational justification for it, which in this case too, like all other cases of the rational justification of norms, is simply the demonstration that it is a suitable means by which to specify what we must do so that we can in any case do what we all want to do, namely, live well and in peace. The "basic norm" too is to that extent "technical", and that was exactly how we reconstructed Max Weber's assertion that we can never accomplish more by scientific or other rational means, through "procedures

⁶ Wilhelm Kamlah, *Philosophische Anthropologie* (Mannheim, Wien, Zürich, 1972), p. 95.

of any kind whatsoever", than an analysis of the incompatibility of what various people want, and a specification of the conditions of the compatibility of, and the means by which to bring about, what we want that *is* compatible. On the other hand, how to bring about the validity in society of what we have thus specified with objective or logical validity is a separate problem.

III. Pragmatism, or Politics and the Ethics of Discourse

I propose to reconstruct the rational meaning of the word "pragmatism" in the sense that it has in ordinary language. I do not lay claim here to any correspondence between my results and the concept of pragmatism employed in doctrines and schools in the history of philosophy. I do not intend any analysis of the history of the concept such as might demonstrate a relationship between the everyday concept of pragmatism and the doctrinal use of the word. For simplicity, in this text, I include among the types of discourse in regard to which pragmatism keeps us free of illusions about the limits of their meaningfulness only discourses directed at the rational establishment of conflict-resolving norms.

To begin with I will recapitulate the schema according to which, in cases of conflicting actions, a norm can be rationally justified which will regulate the actions of the parties involved in such a way as to resolve the conflict.

1. The situation of conflict is described, for example, as a situation of competition in the use of a resource, with predictably destructive consequences. The over-fishing of whales by competing whaling fleets of different nationalities, which threatens the survival of some species, is a concrete contemporary example of this, and one that recommends itself as an example by its simplicity.

2. It is established or assumed that the participants share a desire to resolve the conflict, that is, to avoid mutual injury resulting from their currently conflicting actions, through altering these actions by agreement. In our example this means that it is established or assumed that there is a shared desire to preserve the threatened species so as to be able to hunt members of these species in the future.

3. On the basis of assumptions about reality and supplementary assumptions about the effects of actions in altering reality, those actions are specified which are suited to securing what it has been established or assumed that the parties agree in desiring as an alteration in the present situation of conflict. In our example that means primarily the establishment of a catch quota which will preserve the endangered species.

4. One formulates the norm which, if it were put into effect,

would prescribe to all parties how they must act in order to be able to do what it has been established or assumed that they want to do.

This schema for the rational justification of norms has an appearance of triviality. But it has not been trivialized, and the reason is that it was trivial to begin with. It is important to remember how trivial the process of rationally justifying norms is, because this reminder helps us to locate correctly the difficulties that clearly do occur in resolving conflicts in politics, law and morals. Very seldom are we dealing, in cases of conflict, with problems in the process of rationally justifying conflict-resolving norms.

What difficulties do we have to deal with in cases of conflict? I would like to mention two especially important ones. First, there are the difficulties that result from the hiatus between the cognitive validity of norms and their validity in society. Second, there are the difficulties that result from the incompatibility of cognitive systems of orientation which predetermine what it is possible for a person to describe as being the case. I would like to comment now as briefly as possible on each of these two types of difficulty.

1. A norm possesses cognitive validity by virtue of its rational justification. It must adequately describe the conflict the normative solution of which is in question. It must be correct in the establishment of the fact that, or in the assumption that, the parties involved want to alter the given situation in such a way as to resolve the conflict. It must be reliable in the empirical assumptions about reality upon which we depend in our expectation that appropriate action will have results that alter reality in such a way as to resolve the conflict, and finally it must correctly derive the norm that prescribes corresponding actions from the sequence of propositions that justifies it in the way we have characterized.

This norm possesses validity in society, however, only when the serious intention of obeying it has been expressly declared by all the parties, or — and this is the normal case when norms have validity in society — when appropriately legitimized institutions have duly decided to put the norm into effect.

Admittedly, it is natural to raise the following arguments as an objection to the use of the distinction between cognitive validity and validity in society that we have been discussing. The will to alter a situation of conflict in such a way as to resolve the conflict is after all the basis, presupposed as existing in fact, of any discourse aimed at the rational establishment of the norm which would prescribe the corresponding situation-altering actions to all parties. Accordingly, the successful rational justification of such a norm would in fact, for everyone who shares the will which is the indispensable basis of this rational justification, be identical with the recognition of the validity

of this norm in society as well, because anyone who does not recognize what he should do simply cannot do what he has declared from the beginning that he wants to do.

How can the usefulness of the distinction between the cognitive validity of norms and their validity in society be defended against this argument? It is enough, I think, to point to the fact that both individual and collective subjects, although they know what they should do in order to be able to do what they want to do, nevertheless do not do it, or, on the plane of the activity of institutions that make decisions to put norms into effect, do not act to make valid in society the norms that they should. How is it that this is the case, and how is it that, accordingly, discourses aimed at establishing norms rationally are not as a rule suited to bringing about, by their mere success in accomplishing that aim, the validity of rationally justified norms in society? The answer is that the life circumstances of the parties involved in a conflict are as a rule very different, and consequently these parties would experience very different side-effects as a result of actions governed by the conflict-resolving norm. In our example, the normative catch quotas which would preserve the threatened species mean for one group a failure to amortize their whaling fleet, for another an increase in the rate of unemployment, for a third they mean both of these, and for a fourth they mean a failure to meet the Five Year Plan's targets for closing the fat or protein gap.

To be sure, one could also discuss at the outset of the norm-justifying discourse these additional conflicts that participants would have to encounter as a result of obeying the rationally undisputed conflict-resolving norm, and one could also discuss the additional conflicts arising from side-effects of the norms introduced to resolve the conflicts that were side-effects on the first level, and so on. To put it briefly, in principle the discussion could be continued until a scheme was arrived at for re-ordering the life-circumstances of all parties from the ground up, making them homogeneous and free from conflict.

The pragmatic thing to do, not only from the point of view of efficiency but also from the point of view of conserving freedom, is not to enter into such fundamental discourses aimed at removing all traces of the contingent identity of the parties involved. The pragmatic thing to do is to limit discourses directed toward the rational establishment of norms to the goal of resolving isolated conflicts and, once a norm has been successfully justified, to postpone the decision to put it into effect until the participants have had an opportunity, through discourses that are diversified in ways that reflect contingent identities, to resolve internally the conflicts resulting from the parti-

cular side-effects.

Naturally it may happen that, because of concern for the side-effects of the solution of the conflicts arising from first-order side-effects, they may not succeed in this, or because of the temporal nature of the problem they may not succeed in sufficient time. The usual consequence of this is that the participants are not able to do what they know they would have to do in order to be able to do what they want to do. Pragmatism in the limitation of discourses aimed at rationally establishing norms indeed cannot of itself avoid such consequences. But unpragmatic rejection of the limits of discourses, a rejection motivated by the desire to unify the contingent identities of the participating empirical subjects in accordance with the model of the unity of the transcendental subject, is certainly even less able to avoid such consequences. And in cases where quickly gaining effective assent to the validity of a norm in society seems far more important than dealing with its side-effects, then, as long as there is time, one must attempt to persuade people precisely that such is the case, and to the extent that there is no time for this, one must seek a decision (if the decision is not to be allowed to result simply from time running out) through some other process.

In the case of the authorities to whose competence to make decisions we are subject either functionally or regionally, this "other process" is institutionalized, and every decision is nothing but a pragmatic act of the limitation of discourse. In the case of the parliamentary procedure for decreeing norms, what this means is that in each case in which a norm is proposed, equipped with excellent rational justifications provided by ministerial experts, three "readings" take place, and then a vote is taken. Voting is the decisionistic standard procedure for limiting discourses pragmatically by counting rather than by weighing opinions.

The necessity of such limitation of discourse cannot in fact be established on the basis of the transcendental constitution of the participating subjects. It is a result of empirical circumstances, for instance, the subjects' mortality, or, in regard to the matter the use of which is in dispute, the need to conclude the discourse in a briefer period than moths and rust will require to consume it. Within this period of time one can of course in turn dispute — that is, carry on discourses — as to how long the discourse shall be allowed to continue before a decision is reached, and it is such discourses about the limitation of discourses that we regularly carry on when we are seeking to establish norms for governing institutional decision procedures. The latitude for decision in these cases is naturally very wide, and there are no overriding arguments for "reading" a bill three times rather than once or five times. Probably we can agree that the ulti-

mate reason for this common parliamentary rule is the principle that good things always come in threes.

2. The second difficulty that regularly hampers our efforts to resolve conflict situations by establishing norms, even when our procedures for justifying such norms rationally are functioning perfectly, I described as the incompatibility of cognitive systems of orientation which predetermine incompatible possibilities, even to describe what is the case. Here one immediately thinks of examples from the history of religions. From the point of view of a pragmatics of discourse-limitation, however, the great contemporary ideologies have the same status. Is the thesis that our society is basically a class society and that politics in this society is basically class struggle one that is at all capable of being discussed? In principle, transcendentially, of course it is; but the degree of politicization that even our scientific institutions, which are after all conceived institutionally as loci of the undiluted validity of the transcendental principle, have reached in many areas has long placed that thesis beyond the reach of discussion both for those who support it and for those who reject it. Of course it is this very inaccessibility that really defines the pragmatics of national and international politics, right up to the politics of coexistence. There is no need to illustrate the extent to which political conflicts are defined by, at least among other things, the incompatible cognitive orientations by which the parties to the conflict allow themselves to be guided in their practical activities. In principle, of course, the solution of these conflicts could also be accomplished by means of discourses conducted with the purpose of rendering the practice-guiding cognitive systems of orientation compatible with one another. However the pragmatics of discourse-limitation recommend that we not conduct such discourses. This pragmatism is based on a recognition of the fact that one can discuss one thing only by not discussing other things. It is after all a defining characteristic of a political actor that he represents something which he is not prepared to submit to the disposition of the process and which in this sense he is also not prepared to discuss. Today these undiscussable contents still include, as elements of the historically contingent identity of collective and institutional subjects, orientation systems, which, equipped with cultural or even institutional protection, embody interpretations of social reality which have weighty consequences, pregnant with conflict, in political practice. In the confrontation of subjects having such an orientation with other subjects having a different orientation, one cannot, as it were, take the unity of the world as a given at all, although such unity is a condition of the possibility of any discourse that it is supposed to be possible to conduct with the aim of rationally establishing a conflict-resolving norm.

In such cases the pragmatic thing to do is not even to begin the discourse — a discourse which, it is true, is possible in principle, from a transcendental perspective — about the respective heterogeneous, conflict-pregnant basic orientations, but merely to discuss possible solutions of conflicts that can be formulated within the framework of assumptions about reality that are shared by the parties to the conflict, so that to that extent they do after all inhabit one and the same world and stand together on the solid ground of an analogously interpreted reality. An example is the way in which, in the political interaction that is guided by the doctrine of coexistence, the parties' respective ideologies are not discussed; rather they are bracketed out of the discourse and asserted against one another in contexts outside of its boundaries. Or one can exhibit the process in an example of the reverse variety, that of its failure: the fact that the SPDⁱⁱⁱ leadership regards the Young Socialists' thesis that the CDU^{iv} is the political organization of the class enemy as false but nevertheless as capable of discussion, perhaps as a contribution to the discussion of "theory", rather than as a problem of creating order in party discipline or intra-party politics. This very unpragmatic uncertainty with regard to what it makes sense and what it does not make sense to discuss with particular groups, at particular times and under particular circumstances, constitutes the weakness of the SPD in its current efforts at self-presentation and self-assertion.

Pragmatic rules of discourse limitation have been an indispensable element of the theory of discourse since its beginning, and Aristotle already gives examples in his dialectic (for example *Top.* 105 a 5-7) from which one can infer such rules. The structural quintessence of these rules is that they define limits beyond which dicta (*Sprüche*) require not contradiction (*Widerspruch*) but rather a refusal of further discussion; in other words they require [[non-verbal]] resistance (*Widerstand*). The discourse-euphoric concern that to go over in this way from contradiction to [[non-verbal]] resistance is to break off communication is the result of a mistaken view of the nature and conditions of communicative interaction. After all, discourses directed at rationally establishing norms for the purpose of resolving conflicts require as an element of this process of rational justification, as has been shown, an agreement about the nature of the conflict, which is based on shared assumptions about what is the case. They require unity of the world as the transcendental condition of the possibility of coming to an understanding about the world. But the reality is that in the antithesis in communicative practice between contradiction and [[non-verbal]] resistance, the latter is far better adapted to bringing parties to a conflict back to that basis of shared reality, without which there would be no possibility whatsoever of their re-

solving their conflict. The pragmatic superiority of [[non-verbal]] resistance over [[verbal]] contradiction is due to the fact that it minimizes the expenditure of communication needed in order to find a basis of shared reality between the parties to a conflict, this basis being characterized by maximal independence of interpretation. Neither pedagogy nor politics would be possible without the use of this discourse-limiting pragmatics of communicative resistance, and it can be seen that [[non-verbal]] resistance, in relation to verbal contradiction, represents not the termination of communication but rather its non-verbal intensification.

Jürgen Habermas has formulated, in propositions which have the impact of definitive phenomenological insight, four universal requirements which anyone engaging in communicative interaction must satisfy if communication is to occur at all: he must "*express something understandable*", "give [[the other party]] *something* to understand", "make *himself* thereby understandable", and "come to an understanding *with another person*".⁷ Now it is just as definitively clear that it is precisely by fulfilling these requirements that the power of [[non-verbal]] resistance, to force the parties back to a basis of shared reality, operates. Jürgen Habermas has precisely described not only the transcendental conditions of seminar discussions but also, by the same token, the universal pragmatic horizon of, for example, the Cuban missile crisis. The solution of that crisis was a communicative process. But the medium of this communicative process was not a discourse, but rather the pragmatic limitation of discourse by the transition to intensive communication by means of [[non-verbal]] resistance actions having a maximal independence of interpretation. Karl Marx's famous short definition of revolution as the practice of proceeding from the weapon of critique to the critique of weapons is based, in its own way, on the same insight into the unavoidability of cases requiring a discourse-limiting pragmatics.

In many cases the pragmatics of discourse-limitation clearly responds to the reality of a lack of time. All decision-making institutions, which give conflict-dissolving norms validity in society not by virtue of their rational justification but by virtue of a decision, obey the imperative of the scarcity of time. However, the pragmatics which limits or avoids discourses about historically contingent and identity-securing systems of orientation, basic values, etc., follows another imperative in addition to that of the scarcity of time. I would like to describe this imperative as that of minimalizing demands for universalizability. Its purport is that the requirement that

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 2.

we meet together with others on the basis of a reality interpreted in a manner on which we can agree is politically meaningful and legitimate only to the extent that conflicts requiring solution are present, conflicts the settlement of which by means of norms is possible only by means of a process which begins with a homogeneous experience of reality.

The resolution of conflicts by means of the discursive rational justification of norms which, if they are obeyed, will alter reality in such a way as to resolve the conflict does indeed presuppose, as a communicative condition of its possibility, a uniformity in the interpretation and experience of this reality. But it is only real conflicts that can justify the requirement that we reconcile our views with those of others so as to deal with them within the horizon of a shared view of the world. For the tendency to try to homogenize our world-views beyond the extent required by our real, conflict-pregnant interdependencies with one another has the effect itself of creating conflict. It creates conflicts of an especially acute variety, for which there are no possible pragmatic solutions, but only terminations by means of the liquidation of our mutual existence as different from one another.

The pragmatism of the imperative of the scarcity of time provides for effectiveness. The pragmatism of the imperative of minimizing what one can be forced to discuss provides for the freedom of subjects in their historically contingent identity.

TRANSLATION NOTES

ⁱ As usual in German texts, "science" ("Wissenschaft") throughout this paper is not to be understood as only what we think of as "hard" science – the natural and (sometimes) social sciences – but as including the humanities ("Geisteswissenschaften") as well.

ⁱⁱ *Dezisionistisch*. "Decisionism" (a term introduced into jurisprudence and political theory by Carl Schmitt in the 1920s) designates a doctrine that emphasizes the necessity of making decisions which cannot be fully justified by appeal to valid norms or to rational argument. Prof. Lübbe has discussed the concept in his "Dezisionismus in der Moral-Theorie Kants", in *Epirrhosis. Festschrift C. Schmitt*, ed. Hans Barion et al. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1968), pp. 567-78.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*: German Social Democratic Party.

^{iv} *Christdemokratische Union*: Christian Democratic Union.

LEIBNIZ'S SYSTEM*

Josef König†

Translated by Eric Miller

1. One of the most striking features of Leibniz's system, evoking admiration, but also puzzlement, is his universalism, that is, his ability to turn diverse, widely separated, and even opposing philosophical doctrines preceding him into a single unity. He was quite aware of this particular character of his system and he remarked on it again and again. Allow me to present at least one of the most telling of such utterances. He writes, "The consideration of this system" — he means his own —

also shows that, when one goes to the root of things, one discovers in most philosophical sects far more reason than one had previously believed. The scanty substantial reality of the things of sense, which the sceptics taught, the reduction of all things to harmonies of numbers, to ideas and perceptions, which the Platonists taught; the identical all-encompassing One of Parmenides and Plotinus, which nevertheless avoids all Spinozism, the necessity of the Stoics, which is still compatible with spontaneity, the life-philosophy of the Kabbalists and the Hermeticists, according to whom sensation is everywhere, the forms and entelechies of Aristotle and the schoolmen, which nevertheless do not exclude the mechanical explanation of all particular phenomena in conformity with Democritus and the moderns: all this is found united as if in a center of perspective, from which the object — which appears confused from every other point — reveals the regularity and harmony of its parts.¹

It is the same universality which, when one tries to measure Leibniz's system with otherwise easily distinguishable designations, confuses and actually even annihilates these designations in a strangely legiti-

* Translated from "Das System von Leibniz", in, Josef König, (Ed.), *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber, 1978).

¹ G. W. Leibniz, *Die Philosophischen Schriften*, ed. by C. I. Gerhardt (Berlin/Leipzig: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1875-1932), IV. 532f (G. W. Leibniz, *Hauptschriften zur Grundlegung der Philosophie*, trans. A. Buchenau, ed. by E. Cassirer [Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1903-1925], II. 285 = the Cassirer-Buchenau Leibniz-edition of the "Philosophische Bibliothek", from which I am usually quoting.)

mate way. Is the system an idealism? a realism? a naturalism? a monism? or a pluralism? Is it rooted more in the other-worldly and in the heavenly and super-heavenly, or in the this-worldly and the earthly? Is it more a philosophy of the inner or of the outer life? Does it prefer the inner or the outer aspect of being? Is it turned more towards psychology or towards physics? The confusion into which the system places someone asking such questions is so fundamental because the initial concepts of the investigation themselves are not left untouched. At first, one believes one can grasp clearly how the system accomplishes the paradoxical, that is, how it confounds, as it were, such apparently easily distinguishable concepts as other-worldly and this-worldly, inner and outer, and blends them as such into one another. To give a further and, as far as the content is concerned, at the same time extreme, example: Are not idea and existence, universal and singular, genus and individual, even if they are not at once distinct concepts, at least clear, easily distinguishable ones? And yet, there emerges from the system the principle which Leibniz himself called paradoxical,² the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, according to which each individual substance as such is an infima species, a universal. Upon this principle, then, rests the fact that the system can, without violence, reach even into the dimension of historical reality and can make otherwise respectable distinctions, such as that of nomothetic and idiographic methods, appear slightly ridiculous.

I ask, whence comes this system's power of unifying what is clearly distinct? Here is the first and, in a certain sense, final answer: from the fundamental idea that substance is monad. Each substance, and thus each monad, is

like a world unto itself, and like a mirror of God, or rather, of the entire universe, which each monad expresses in its own manner, just as the same city is diversely represented, according to the various positions that the observer chooses. Thus the universe is reproduced, in a sense, as many times as there are substances....³

The concept of the monad is in fact that center of perspective which, if we would place ourselves in it, would present to our view those otherwise seemingly incompatible doctrines, which we heard Leibniz enumerate, and to which I could easily add more. I, however, do not wish to follow this well-trodden path once again. Neither do I wish to replace it with a better one, for it is irreplaceable, and, on it, Leibniz himself would be our guide. But, assuming that path as already having been taken, I do want to try to gain another meaning

² Gerhardt IV. 433 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 144).

³ Gerhardt IV. 434 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 144).

for, and another answer to, my initial question about the legitimate roots of this universalism, without impinging at all on the rights of the former.

It has often been asked whether Leibniz's system is not at bottom eclectic. One feels with overwhelming certainty that this is not so, and thus this suspicion is really only a pretext for me to find something. For the allusion to the monad and the following of that path, which I presuppose as completed here, does not suffice to make the non-eclectic purity of the system, the homogeneity of its concepts, the original unity of its style, visible and intelligible. Even if the monad's center of perspective can, without violence, bring us into a position from which we can observe the essential contents of very different philosophies, it is by no means thereby established that the Leibnizian system itself carries the sign of authentic activity, that is, unity of form and content, elastic homogeneity of its fundamental categories, and thus non-eclecticity. The perspectivistically revealing power of the monad, if taken by itself alone, could still leave room for an eclectic coexistence of the leading categories in the presentation and the execution. Indeed, it could even be caused by this eclectic coexistence as if by the monad's dark side. It is not so. That it is not so, however, that the system, can, rather, unify the diversity of its historical reminiscences with the classical purity of its basic logical form, is due, indeed, partially to the conception of the monad. But it is not due to it alone, indeed, less to it than to this basic form itself, which, admittedly, is eminently able to integrate itself by means of the conception of substance as monad. Only from the combination of both (namely, monad and basic form) does the strong impression of the innermost simplicity of the system, does the gripping unison of the otherwise so polyphonic doctrine, result. I have taken upon myself the task of throwing into relief the system's basic form, which organizes everything, and the task of making clear how it provides, in combination with the conception of the monad, the wellsprings of the system's so unforgettably singular physiognomy. At the same time I shall gain herewith the, as it seems to me, pleasing possibility of showing that the more decisively the system shows its own face, the more decisively it reveals its one-sidedness, its tremendous power to exclude all else. This power, admittedly, the creator of the system prefers to leave in the dark, except when he happens to be dealing with Spinoza. It is, however, no less obvious, and is so basically in the same respect, in the case of Plato and Kant. This is a surprising insight with respect to a system which strives for universal harmony; but it has the liberating effect of relieving us of the nightmarish thought of a doctrine the innermost core of which would be nothing but a center of perspective. When in the following

I elucidate this exclusiveness mainly by means of Leibniz's opposition to Kant, I am not thereby neglecting the continuity of development in German intellectual history from Leibniz to Kant, a continuity which, with unforgettable mastery, Ernst Cassirer here at the University of Hamburg taught us to see and appreciate. I shall remain silent on this issue because my intention is a completely different one.

Let me add just one more remark — a very important one, by the way. The basic logical figure of this system, of which I was speaking and of which I shall be speaking, does not come from Aristotelian-Scholastic logic, nor from modern mathematical logic either, even though the latter, with justification, honors Leibniz as its most distinguished ancestor. To investigate its roots would not be in place here; but it must be remarked that it has, up until now, found its most mature expression in Hegel's Logic, in which system it is developed so incomparably more clearly because Hegel was, so to speak, the personified consciousness of the figure itself. I am placing Leibniz, on the one hand (in a certain centrally important respect, which in harmony with the terminology of the history of philosophy, I call a logical one), very close to Hegel. On the other hand, I admit and believe myself to comprehend that Leibniz's own logical doctrine, about which Mr. Sauer is going to speak to us later on, goes rather in the direction of Bertrand Russell's *Principia Mathematica* than in that of Hegel's system of speculative logic. It appears, then, that I can not avoid entertaining the utterly intolerable thought that, with Leibniz, logical activity and the theory of this activity diverge, indeed, that they are possibly even inconsistent. For reasons of time, I must be brief and pithy in regard to this problem. Fortunately, however, I am permitted to do so by the nature of the case itself, or, more precisely, because of the historical situation of the problem to this day. For the relationship of that spiritual reality which is so powerfully embodied in modern mathematical logic to that other, no less substantial and no less genuine reality, which I here, along with Hegel, call speculative logic and whose family tree contains names no less illustrious than, for instance, Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel himself, remains to this hour totally unexplained, uncomprehended, and unpenetrated. And as long as this great riddle of their reconcilability or irreconcilability hangs over our heads, the reservations that I have presented towards my own undertaking remain nothing more than the symptom of a possibly eminently productive (admittedly, purely philosophical)⁴ problem, which should therefore

⁴ I mean thereby that if anything at all, then only a not yet available general philosophical logic could contain the principles also of mathematical logic, whereas the latter can, as regards the former and speculative logic, produce, for objective reasons, nothing better than mere negations.

not hinder us, but spur us on to uncover the situation with respect to Leibniz as far as we are able. If only we had at our disposal genuine concepts and insights with regard to the nature of this so-called speculative logic and with regard to the nature of the relation between it and modern mathematical logic, then, so I hope and so we are justified in hoping, it would inevitably turn out to be the case that the establishment of bold speculative-logical features in Leibniz, together with the unconditional, indeed, gladly conceded admission of great proximity to modern works on mathematical logic, in no way forces us to assume that in Leibniz logical activity and the theory of that activity are irreconcilably inconsistent.

2. Following Hegel, I shall call the basic form of speculative logic, with which we are concerned here, the form of the *encompassing*⁵ universal. The universal or the genus in the usual sense does not *encompass* the particular or the species. In a famous passage in his *Logic*, Hegel explains the notion of this encompassing universal by means of the concept of the universal itself and as such with the following words:

The universal as the concept is itself and its opposite, which is itself again as its posited determination; it encompasses the same (the opposite), and, in it, is with itself. Thus it is the totality and the principle of its difference, which is wholly determined only through itself.⁵

Accordingly, Hegel teaches here that the universal *as such* has two and only two species: namely, first, the universal itself and, second, the particular, that is the *opposite* of the universal. The conception of the encompassing universal is therefore determined by the fact that there exists a duality which is in itself unified, or — if you prefer — that such a duality is spoken of: namely, that the universal is the universal of itself and its opposite; that the genus is the genus of itself and its opposite. Where this is the case, or — if you will — is spoken of, it is the case, or is spoken of, that the universal is an *encompassing* universal. In the same context from which I took the passage quoted above, Hegel then also writes those notorious sentences which have been the object even of moral indignation. In regard to the fact, namely, that the encompassing universal has essentially only two species, that is, itself and its opposite, he writes,

In *nature*, there are admittedly more than two species in a genus, just as these many species cannot have the exhibited relation to one another. Such is the impotence of nature, which cannot hold fast to or present the

⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Zweiter Teil*, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by H. Glockner (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns Verlag, 1928), V. 44; or *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1929), II. 240. [The English trans. of Hegel, however, are by the translator.]

strictness of the concept, and which dissipates in this conceptless, blind manifold.⁶

3. What, however, has this to do with Leibniz? Nothing less than that the concept which, in union with that of the monad, is the principal concept of the Leibnizian system, that of force, of "*Kraft*", of "*Macht*", of "*puissance*", of entelechy — that concept of which Leibniz once wrote to de Volder that our thinking reaches completion and comes to rest only in the conception of force⁷ — is conceived and developed in a manner which can be concisely formulated: that for him force is *a*, indeed, is *the encompassing* universal. Force is for him, as is well known and as he upon occasion also writes explicitly to de Volder,⁸ the "principle of activity and passivity". Accordingly, he distinguishes an active force and a passive force (the *vis activa* and the *vis passiva*). Active force is a kind of spontaneity, the passive force a kind of receptivity.⁹ Receptivity is impressionability, openness, the ability to receive and to suffer. But activity and passivity, spontaneity and receptivity, are contraries, or more strictly, *ἐναντία*, that is opposites. And that force is for Leibniz an *encompassing* genus shows itself even more distinctly in the fact that it is the genus of itself and its opposite, namely the genus of active and passive force. Instead of this, we might also say that he teaches that activity is the genus of itself and of receptivity.¹⁰

What he who studies Leibniz sincerely, that is, he who does not want to fool himself, may find justifiably difficult to comprehend, and, in fact, both in Leibniz's dynamics as well as in his pneumatology, is just this, namely, that passivity or receptivity is not supposed to be anything autonomous and original, but, rather, is introduced and developed as a species of its opposite, that is, as a species of activity. I shall demonstrate this first with respect to his dynamics, then with respect to his pneumatology. When, in dynamics, the body A sets the body B into motion by means of a push, then A would seem to be active and B passive. One also speaks of a transfer

⁶ Hegel V. 45. Hegel's *Science* II. 241-42.

⁷ Gerhardt II. 170 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 289).

⁸ Gerhardt II. 269 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 345).

⁹ Gerhardt V. 155 (Cassirer-Buchenau III. 161).

¹⁰ One must therefore distinguish between the encompassing force and the two species of encompassed forces. The encompassing force is that one which "we are accustomed to call force *as such* (*quae et absolute vis dici solet* — in, G. W. Leibniz, *Mathematische Schriften*, ed. by C. I. Gerhardt [Halle, 1860; Reprint: Hildesheim, 1962], VI. 101). But it is not an abstraction, in the way, for instance, in the notion of a dress, one abstracts from its color. That is why force *as such* is at the same time indeed *active* force, as if the dress *as such* were at the same time, for instance, the *red* dress; and it is the pure spontaneity, the *actus purus*, of God's perceptions as the monad of monads.

of motion, and A would seem to be the spontaneous part and B the receptive part. Now, Leibniz does not dispute the possibility of speaking meaningfully of an impact,¹¹ of a transfer of movement,¹² and, indeed, of any effect at all of two masses¹³ on each other. But taken "in metaphysical strictness", as he then expresses himself,¹⁴ such pushing and indeed any such reversible effects at all of two masses on each other become for him merely phenomena¹⁵ of a metaphysical truth, which — to express it with the conciseness requisite here — consists in the fact that even the apparent passivity of being pushed and of being put into motion is in truth originary activity.¹⁶ Here also lies Leibniz's decisive opposition to Newton. To bring this quickly to light, I need only quote from the instructive notes which Ernst Cassirer attached to his Leibniz edition. I refer to one of his notes to the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence. For Newton holds active force and inert, passive matter to be, as Cassirer there formulates it, "two principles originally foreign and essentially different from one another". For Leibniz, on the contrary, they are "both merely different expressions and conditions of the homogeneous concept of 'energy'".¹⁷ Precisely that which Cassirer here, from his position, calls "different expressions and conditions of the homogeneous concept of 'energy'", is comprehended by speculative logic as energy's encompassing itself and its opposite. This energy is accordingly, as we heard Hegel say, "the totality and the principle of its difference, which is wholly determined only through itself". Energy or activity is the principle of that of which its own difference consists, namely, the principle of activity and passivity. And this difference of activity is determined through itself, that is, through activity itself. The difference between doing and suffering has its metaphysical origin in doing itself,¹⁸ so that here these two different

¹¹ Gerhardt II. 92 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 216).

¹² Gerhardt V. 157 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 164).

¹³ Gerhardt II. 250 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 324).

¹⁴ Gerhardt V. 195. Also compare Gerhardt IV. 440f, (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 155) and Gerhardt IV. 453 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 173).

¹⁵ Gerhardt II. 256 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 330).

¹⁶ Gerhardt II. 251 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 326).

¹⁷ Cassirer-Buchenau I. 162.

¹⁸ An excellent mythical symbol of this idea — hinting at a diversity of things — is to be found in, of all places, the Bible, Gen. 2:2. "And the Lord God made a Woman from the rib, which he took from Man...." Adam, the man, is so to speak, the universal which encompasses himself and his opposite, woman. One may be reminded that the Pythagoreans, for instance, as Aristotle reports (*Metaphysics* A 5, 986 a23-b10), included the antithesis of male and female among their ten antithetical principles (along with one and many, limit and unlimited, rest and motion, light and darkness, good and evil).

things are not, as they are for Newton, "two principles originally foreign and essentially different from one another".

The concept of *appearance* in Leibniz, as well as his characteristic concept of the relation between In Itself and appearance, can really be appropriately explained only with the help of these speculative categories. For Leibniz, appearance is definable as the side of the difference of energy. It is not by chance that in the Leibnizian world of appearance activity and passivity are found as two seemingly originally different principles and could thus possibly be assigned to two different substrates. Much to the contrary, this world is definable precisely by this being so. Thus one can pithily say why and in what sense appearance is "well-founded" for him, *bene fundatum*, as he puts it. It is this because and insofar as the difference between activity and passivity, which defines it, is well-founded, that is, originates in the encompassing activity itself. Activity as the *encompassing* genus is the side of the In Itself or the metaphysical. The two species of this genus, however — activity as a species of itself and its opposite passivity — are the side of appearance. Or said in Platonic-Pythagorean fashion, the one ($\tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\nu$) is the side of the metaphysical truth; the many ($\tau\acute{o}\ \pi\lambda\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$) is the side of appearance or the side of that which — as Leibniz puts it — can be said meaningfully, to be sure, but not with metaphysical strictness. Hegel's speculative-logical statement that the encompassing universal is the totality and the principle of its difference changes thus without further ado into a statement which is characteristic of and uncommonly revealing of the innermost core of Leibniz's position, namely, the statement that the difference between In Itself and appearance is the difference of the *In Itself itself* and that this is therefore the totality and the principle of this, its difference. Of a number of possible formulations of the conceivably radical opposition between Leibniz and Kant, this is one of the most fruitful. That the appearance is the appearance of the In Itself or that it is the In Itself which appears in the appearance is said by both. That is obvious, a matter of course, a kind of tautology. But for Kant the In Itself is not encompassing and thus not the principle of the difference between itself and appearance, a difference which is therefore not the own *proper* difference of the *In Itself itself*. With unfailing tact, Kant refrained from using the expression "well-founded" — be it for the purpose of imputing it to his appearance-world or for the purpose of denying it. For only on the foundation of speculative logic is this expression at all meaningful.

Leibniz's pneumatology is governed through and through by the same principle. There are, as Leibniz lets one of the dialogue partners, Philaleth, say in the *Nouveaux Essais*, "only two kinds of activity of which we possess any conception, namely, thinking and mov-

ing".¹⁹ Leibniz, answering out of Theophiles' mouth, agrees that he finds this view quite plausible. With motion we stand in the middle of dynamics, with thinking in the middle of Leibniz's pneumatology. And in the center of this pneumatology stands the famous doctrine, so diametrically opposed to Kant, that intuition is confused thought, and thus a species of thought. Thought is essentially spontaneous, even for Kant; intuition is essentially receptive, even for Leibniz; and they are opposites, for the essentially spontaneous is the opposite of the essentially receptive. The deeper meaning of this doctrine, and the only one belonging to genuine philosophizing, a meaning which changes it from an essentially unverifiable and therefore idle hypothesis into a philosophical statement, is that thought and intuition, these opposites, are species of thought and that thought is thus the genus of itself and its opposite. Thought, therefore, is for Leibniz the universal which encompasses its opposite, intuition. These opposites are species of thought, and thought is thus the genus of itself and its opposite. Thought, therefore, is for Leibniz the universal which encompasses its opposite, intuition. The opposition of thought and intuition is thus significantly the difference of thinking itself. It is for *this reason* that intuition belongs, for Leibniz, essentially to appearance. For Kant the aprioric intuition is the principle of the appearing world as an appearing one. For Leibniz, on the contrary, the appearance-world is the principle of intuition, for, as I have shown, for him appearance is defined by the fact that in it the opposites are separate, seemingly autonomous. The Kantian doctrine of sensibility and understanding, of receptivity and spontaneity as two different roots of knowledge is the pneumatological counterpart to the Newtonian doctrine of active force and passive matter as essentially different principles in dynamics, and these two doctrines together then form the rightfully famous and indeed classical antithesis to Leibniz's position. To be sure, Kant then presents the notion that thought and intuition are mutually dependent. For the purpose of carrying out this notion, he must try to show that the categories of spontaneous thought are restricted to the receptive intuition. Since for Leibniz, however, thought *encompasses* intuition, it is essentially free vis-à-vis intuition, and has an originary right to its noumena.

The essence of this opposition, however, comes to the fore in an even more exemplary fashion in Leibniz's relation to Plato. The Platonic intuition of the ideas is essentially *πάθος*, passive reception. The Platonic monad, if there were one, would not only not have *no* windows, but would be, as it were, nothing but window. It is pre-

¹⁹ Gerhardt V. 157.

cisely the impression, the reception, which has metaphysical status in the Platonic Philosophy. Leibniz finds the force, the substance, the being, in himself. He says, "Being is innate for us, because we ourselves are."²⁰ Plato finds in himself only poverty, *πενία*, and the reception of the idea is *in itself* reception or *impression of being*.²¹ This Platonic man is, by the way, totally the Greek man, the *θνητός*, the mortal, whereas Leibniz, with admirable consistency, makes man immortal.²²

4. I may perhaps hope that what has been said so far has made the essence of the basic speculative form and its influence on Leibniz's system clear in at least a general way. Since time is very short, I shall now attempt, ignoring important questions of detail, to illustrate, using the eminent example of the concept of *harmony*, how this concept, so uncommonly characteristic of the system, arises out of this basic form, a form to which Leibniz himself does not explicitly refer, but which nevertheless orders the various aspects of his thinking.

I said at the beginning that in Leibniz the basic speculative form integrates itself through the concept of the monad; and that the powerful impression of the innermost simplicity of the system arises only out of the union of both concepts. This should be the basis of our next step. The very abstract notion that activity encompasses both itself and passive suffering becomes more substantial as the notion of an encompassing *agent*. And the Leibnizian monad is *this encompassing agent*. The monad, this metaphysical point, this metaphysical atom or individual, is thus at the same time made into a genus, a universal, for the concept of the encompassing contains the concept of the genus in itself. The notion that the metaphysical individual is simultaneously the universal and that, conversely, the metaphysical universal is simultaneously the individual — this notion, which surpasses, but yet contains the principle of the identity of indiscernibles — finds its ultimate realization in Leibniz only in the concept of the monad of monads, that is in the concept of God. We shall for the time being, however, avoid the monad of monads as far as possible and limit our exposition to the monads. For, in what we have just developed, we have the *first* of the two moments of the concept of Leibnizian harmony before us. Namely, species purely as species are in harmony with each other and with their genus. The

²⁰ Gerhardt V. 93-98.

²¹ Let me here refer to my book *Sein und Denken* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1937), esp. to §11, nos. 3 and 4 and §13, no. 6.

²² Man and indeed any self-conscious monad at all are for him "like little Gods" (Gerhardt VII. 541).

determination of the monad as the spontaneous, and thus — since for Leibniz spontaneity encompasses — as the *encompassing* spontaneous, contains therefore the notion of a harmony not only between the encompassed species, but also between them and the encompassing genus, so that the conception of a monad which would be indeed a *monad*, but not a *harmonizing* monad, is a merely popular conception. The *second* moment of the concept of harmony supplements the first one decisively through a characterization of the parts that are in harmony. The monad as spontaneous substance is, as we saw, the side of the In Itself; and the In Itself is for Leibniz, as was already noted, the principle of the difference between itself and appearance, that is, it is an encompassing genus. Accordingly, not only do In Itself and appearance harmonize with each other with conceptual necessity, but they also harmonize with the encompassing In Itself of the genus, that is with the monad of monads, or God. We have to distinguish two admittedly only abstractly different harmonies: First, the one between the encompassed In Itself and appearance. The encompassed In Itself is, however, the *many individual* monads. The second harmony is between these two as encompassed species with God as the encompassing monad of monads. What this second characteristic of the concept of harmony adds to the first is, therefore, that it is essentially one between In Itself and appearance. In Itself and appearance are the parts of the harmony that harmonize with each other; and that precisely *they* are these parts *defines* the very special nature of this harmony. Our concern now is to elucidate this very special nature by means of what we have already developed.

First of all, a preliminary remark on the organization of the reflections to follow. We must, to stress it again, distinguish between two harmonies, first, the harmony between the two encompassed species on the one hand and God as the encompassing monad of monads on the other hand; second, the harmony between the species — that is, between the many In Themselves, the actual, infinitely many monads — and appearance. Obviously the second cannot be fully comprehended apart from the first, just as little as the harmony between the species can be comprehensible without that between them and the genus. Since, however, a step by step, discursive exposition cannot be avoided, I shall first discuss the harmony between the encompassed species, that is, the many monads and the *one* appearance, drawing upon the example of the harmony of any given monad with so-called appearance. What is true of this arbitrarily selected monad will be true in the same way of all. What kind of harmony is this harmony? We shall try to think the harmony *itself* — not the parts or relata between which it exists — that is, the “between” of the parts. What arouses amazement in this attempt is the

recognition that *as* harmony, *as* relation, it is, to begin with, merely a neither-nor. It is neither a real nor an ideal relation. It is not a real agreement, in the way the meeting of two persons shaking hands or exchanging loving glances is a real agreement. But if, on the other hand, the harmony of, for instance, two colors with each other is called an ideal harmony and relation, and, indeed, with justification, then this Leibnizian harmony, because it is between monad and appearance, also fails to be the ideal one. We perceive, for instance, the falling of a meteor. My or your perception of this fall is the side of the In Itself, whereas the meteor and its falling are the side of appearance, are the appearance itself. What then is here the harmony *itself* and *as such* between these two? For it is made evident by the example that it is neither a real nor an ideal one. Now, the harmony between these two — and in general between In Itself and appearance — is nothing other than the perception itself and as such, that is, perception *is their existence*. The perception itself is also neither a real nor an ideal relation; and yet, it is itself and as such still something beside and beyond the relata of this very special relation, which it is and represents. For it does not consist entirely either in the *perceiving* In Itself or in the *perceived* appearance. And what it is itself and as such Leibniz says with the word “harmony”. It would be completely mistaken — because one would be slipping from the pure lines of these categories into a bastardized conceptualization — to say that what is perceived is an image, something immanent to consciousness, that is, something like Schopenhauer’s representation, *repraesentatio*, which is characterized and defined by the fact that it allows him to say that the world is our representation. It would, however, be just as mistaken — and for the same reason — to say that what is perceived is a real thing. We already know Leibniz’s term for this perceived something. It is not an image in us, nor is it a real thing outside; it is “appearance”. But what is this appearance? And here we have reached the point from which we can clearly see the other harmony, which had up until now been kept in the background, the one between the encompassed species and God. For, through the previous considerations, a more concrete meaning has tacitly accrued to the question about what appearance might actually be. If what is perceived is one of the two relata of that very special relation, the existence of which perception itself and as such represents, then this is only meaningfully possible if that which is perceived is something which remains identical with itself. When one, therefore, says that what is perceived is appearance, one has thereby expressed the latter’s remaining identical with itself as its actual problem. The question about the essence of appearance for Leibniz is, so far, precisely the question about the essence of its remaining identical with itself.

Only by strength of this identity can there be truth to the statement that different monads perceive *one and the same* appearance. Only by strength of this identity is Leibniz permitted to think the thought that the monads mirror or express *one and the same* universe. What is the basis of the possibility that this appearance should have a kind of identity, seeing that it represents neither an immanent image in the consciousness of the monad nor a real thing outside of it? How is the notion of the numerical unity of the entire universe as the totality of appearance meaningfully even possible, seeing that at the same time this universe is, in consequence of the conception of the monad, "reproduced as many times as there are substances", so that Leibniz even flatly states that the universe is not a "unified whole" at all?²³ With such questions we stand before the innermost essence of this concept of harmony. For Leibniz conceives the identity of appearance as the harmony of the actual, infinite multitude of harmonies presented earlier. The identity of appearance is the harmony of harmonies. As a harmony, this harmony of harmonies is itself again a perception — in fact, the perception of the omniscient God. For God also perceives. He also is a monad. That he is the monad of monads does not change the fact that he is a monad. The harmony which the divine perception itself and as such represents is the existing guarantee of harmony among the perceptions of the actual, infinitely many monads.²⁴ Or, the same thing expressed in the concepts of the basic speculative form, the harmony between the encompassing genus and its species is the itself existing guarantee of the harmony among the encompassing species.²⁵ That the identity of appearance is the divine harmony of harmonies makes appearance truly "well-founded". This means at the same time that it does not have its identity in itself as is the case with every monad, but rather in another, in God himself. For this reason it is indeed something "well-founded", but also something merely founded, and not itself an entity. Matter, which is after all essentially appearance, and which simultaneously represents the material of which appearance consists, is thus not an entity. Matter, which lies furthest from God,²⁶ which does not, as does every monad, carry "the stamp of divine infinity",²⁷ and which is not, as is the self-conscious monad,

²³ *Mathematische Schriften* III/2. 535 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 368).

²⁴ The basis of my exposition here is principally Gerhardt IV. 439f (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 153-55).

²⁵ Expressed popularly: God has so arranged things that the perceptions of the monads agree with each other. Their harmony is thus a "preestablished" one.

²⁶ Matter is merely furthest from God, not opposed to him. God is opposed only to the nothing, not to matter. Gerhardt VI. 537 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 61).

made in God's own image, is nevertheless, as compensation as it were, that alone which rests *directly* on the divine foundation, in that the axis which lends it identity and around which its nothingness turns is directly the perception of the living God himself. The identity with itself or the selfsameness of matter is, therefore, truly no illusion, but, since it is a real other, different from matter — that is, different from that *of which* it is the identity — it is indeed the origin of the illusion of the substantiality of matter. Matter is not substance and is thus not an entity, but it does, nevertheless, necessarily carry with itself the illusion of being substance and entity. And thus it is quite true that you and I see one and the same meteor falling in the distance, even though this meteor only seems to be an entity and a substance. The history of philosophy, I believe, knows few thoughts of equally direct power and depth. And since, furthermore, the appearance-world is the world of mechanical events, whereas the In Itself is the realm which is governed by systems of teleological law, we have, from what we have developed, simultaneously also a first clue to the comprehension of Leibniz's doctrine about the harmonious relation between mechanical and teleological systems of law.

5. I shall, however, break off this discussion here, in order to ask for your attention for a reflection, reaching both backwards and forwards, on the meaning and intention of my entire exposition. It is not my intention to add to the gallery of the so-called pictures of the Leibnizian system yet another one. Besides, my expositions would not even actually be a *new* picture, but rather just an attempt at the restoration of an old picture, which has become somewhat unrecognizable for the cultural consciousness of the present. I am, rather, making the effort to discuss the system purely as a philosopher and, while not making the problems which arise in such confrontations into the main point, not trying to circumvent them either. For this purpose, having started from the basic speculative conception has a double advantage. First of all, it places us directly into that purely philosophical — that is, neither mathematical nor scientific — element, whose sphere of influence Leibniz as little escaped or wished to escape as a fish his watery home. And since, for all that, the system does, on the other hand, unquestionably carry all the signs even of a particularly close relation to mathematics and to the mathematical natural sciences of its epoch, it has, secondly, the advantage of giving at least a first hint about how the great problem, which, to be sure, is contained in this relation, could be given a philosophical foundation. That Leibniz, beside the overwhelming

²⁷ Cassirer-Buchenaue II. 499.

number of other things he could do, was also a mathematical genius and an important physicist is well known; and for many philosophically animated minds this is a comfort: their secret scepticism about the reality content of philosophical reflection uses the fact to bolster the hope that philosophy has substance after all, since even such a respectable researcher as Leibniz seriously engaged in it. Such timid trust, admittedly, is rendered groundless by my exposition. Leibniz was not the great philosophical thinker that he was *because* he was a mathematician and a physicist. But he does indeed present his at the core purely philosophical statements throughout with the help of mathematical or mathematico-physical categories and analogies — herein he is the exact opposite of Hegel. Thus, for instance, the monad is for him an — admittedly metaphysical — point, which, as he explains very early on,²⁸ its indivisibility notwithstanding, “is made out of the ideas, like the center out of the angles; for the angle is a part of the center; even though the center is indivisible;” and so “the entire nature of the mind can be explained geometrically”. Thus he understands perception as a kind of “expression” of what is perceived, which “expresses” the latter in the same sense as “a perspectivistic projection its corresponding geometrical figure”.²⁹ Thus the unnoticeable little perceptions are for him, so to speak, the differentials of consciousness, by means of which “the present is pregnant with the future and pervaded with the past”.³⁰ Leibniz very probably ascribes this being pregnant and pervaded to every instantaneous state of a mathematically comprehensible natural process, in fact, clearly insofar as the differentiation of its mathematical expression permits one to give the value at any given point in time of the physical quantities entering into it. In pursuing this approach, the notion of the identity of the monad becomes for him the notion of a particular law, which contains its future states in itself in the same way as a mathematical equation contains the values of its derivatives.³¹ And, with the same thing in mind, he writes, for instance, to de Volder,³² that a sequence of numbers is, to be sure, certainly not a chronological succession, but the chronological succession of a monad's perceptions is indeed a sequence, which

has in common with other sequences that the rule of the sequence already indicates the goal at which one must arrive upon further progress....³³

²⁸ In a letter to Duke Joh. Fr. von Braunschweig-Hannover on May 21, 1671 (Gerhardt I. 61). Compare, for instance, the letter to the Electress Sophie (Gerhardt VII. 554).

²⁹ Gerhardt II. 112 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 233).

³⁰ Gerhardt V. 41-61: Preface.

³¹ Gerhardt II. 264 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 340).

³² Gerhardt II. 263 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 338).

I am asking about the pertinent reasons which make this procedure meaningfully possible, or at least appear to make it possible. It must, so I dare to conclude, be part of the character of mathematics itself, that it lends itself to this. Leibniz will have perceived or at least have interpreted this essence in such a way that it releases and sets free, as it were, the ability of mathematics to deliver conceptual means for the treatment of purely philosophical contents. It is my conviction that this was so, a conviction which I shall support and elucidate by means of a reference to an exemplary concept in Leibniz himself. In that work which carries the title so appropriate for our present perspective, namely, "The Metaphysical Origins of Mathematics", Leibniz in a long chain of particularly ingenious definitions develops, among others, the concepts, first, of a certain homogeneity of mathematical elements and, second, of a certain homogeneity of the same.³⁴ As far as the definition of homogeneity is concerned, it is enough to know here that it indeed allows Leibniz to call a curve and a line homogeneous elements, but not boundary and what is bounded, intersection and what it intersected, instant and time, point and space, nor what is in motion and what is extended. Even though, however, these last sets of opposites, which can obviously all be classified under the antithesis of the discrete and the continuous, are not homogeneous with each other, neither are they, nevertheless, absolutely heterogeneous for him. They are, rather, homogeneous, in so far, as he defines it, as "the one can be turned into the other through continuous change".³⁵ Thus the mathematical point, which Leibniz allows himself to regard as "something movable", is turned into a line by means of motion, so that he can define a line as the "path of a point". And it is not far-fetched now, but is rather quite plain, that this metaphysical concept of the homogeneity of mathematical elements that are not homogeneous with each other, is actually referring to the same state of affairs that speculative logic would describe by saying that the boundary, the *πέρας*, the measure, is the encompassing genus of itself and of its opposite, namely, of what is bounded, the *πεπερασμένον*, what is measured.³⁶

³³ Compare Critical Note No. 1, at the end.

³⁴ *Mathematische Schriften* VII. 20 (Cassirer-Buchenau I. 57ff).

³⁵ It should be remembered here that "homogeneous" means "belonging to the genus". With the word "homogeneous", on the other hand, Leibniz wants to say that the homogeneous elements do not, to be sure, belong to the same genus, but have, as it were, the same procreator and father, insofar as they can be turned into one another through continuous change. It is therefore at least possibly misleading to translate homogeneous with "related by essence", as Buchenau does in Cassirer's edition. For homogeneous elements are heterogeneous elements, but certainly of a special kind, namely those that can be turned into one another through continuous change.

³⁶ Compare to the entire passage the Critical Note No. 2, at the end.

If, furthermore, we also consider what was just noted, namely, that all of these mathematical antitheses can be classified under that of the discrete and the continuous, then here as well the speculative formulation is suggested, that the discrete encompasses itself and its opposite, the continuous. Here as well, this turn of phrase has not simply the meaningless nature of a mere notational change for an of itself stable notion. For it has revealing power in relation to the metaphysical system of Leibniz. It concisely fixes the system's position concerning the relation of the two. Since, namely, the discrete is comprehended by Leibniz as encompassing, being discrete is for him the determination of the side of the In Itself; and being continuous and being appearance are for him interchangeable concepts. At the same time it gives the key — which, however, I cannot pursue any further here — to understanding the way in which Leibniz not only posed, but also tried to solve the famous labyrinth problem of the composition of the continuum.

6. Let me show with yet two more, very different examples that the basic speculative form more or less pervades the system and, therefore, that returning to it permits one to express the system's genuine essence — and simultaneously also its most genuine problematics.³⁷ The first one concerns the foundations of the philosophy of morals. In this field, too, one is not just talking nonsense, but is creating a beginning for understanding, when one says that what is perfect is the encompassing genus of itself and its opposite, what is imperfect. This statement is the metaphysical foundation of Leibniz's famous optimism, according to which ours is the best of all possible worlds. If Voltaire was able to ridicule this so delightfully in his *Candide*, one may be certain that what made this ridicule possible and nourished it was not a mere passion for satire, but a different metaphysics, one opposed to Leibniz's principle of encompassing. "For men" — thus Leibniz himself once wrote³⁸ — "have never shown more spirit than when jesting".

The second example can bring to light the possibly most decisive physiognomic aspect of the system, which makes it one specifically of the enlightenment — albeit with depth. For Leibniz — in this he thinks and feels thoroughly differently from, for instance, Goethe, whose theory of colors he, along with Newton, would have rejected, as one would have, on the whole, suspected anyway, and as becomes, moreover, very likely from the *Nouveaux Essais* III, chap. 4, §16 — "the sensible qualities are in effect *bidden* qualities"; and thus

³⁷ Compare also to this passage the Critical Note No. 2.

³⁸ Gerhardt IV. 570 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 404).

there must be other, *more manifest* ones, ... which render them explicable. Far from being true, then, as some imagine, that we understand the sensible things alone, it is precisely they that we understand the least.³⁹

For him, sensible, intuitive things are what is dark and unknown, and the purest possible thoughts are the clear, the apparent, and the known. Remembering now that for Leibniz thought encompasses intuition, one may say, following this, that the manifest and known is the genus of itself and of the hidden and unknown. This determination, however, is in general, so to speak, *the* formula for any specifically enlightenment philosophy. It contains the secret of the palette, the use of which gives to the image of a philosophy the true enlightenment touch. And in the specifically Leibnizian soil, there springs out of it that intoxicating, almost adventurous, baroque feature of the system, which — in a strange contrast to its intellectuality, but one which follows consistently — can meet precisely those multitudes halfway who desire bold, sensuous vividness in metaphysics. The system can thus be popularized, simply for this reason alone, without becoming shallow. In this fashion originate all those equally transcendent and sensuous conceptions which pervaded not only the smaller spirits of the eighteenth century, but also a Lessing or a Herder, indeed — although only in a few things — even Goethe, until it was brought to an end by Kant's critical philosophy and, in another way, by romanticism. For instance, the notion of the possibility of totally different senses from the ones that man has at his disposal; the notion of higher geniuses, far surpassing man in perfection, which have nevertheless a sensible-physical organization, which, although more refined, is analogous to our own; the notion of uncountably many other really existing worlds within the universe, on other planets or other stars, and with creatures of quite varying perfection; the notion of the complete immortality of the human soul and human body, and the other beautiful notion connected with it, that of death as a passage into one of those more perfect worlds; and finally the notion of a sensible eternity, which irradiates the idea of God's kingdom with earthly color and makes the eschatological secrets into a reality which may still be very distant in time and space, but which is nevertheless essentially already present. All this is truly of the enlightenment, but it does not lack depth. It is a little adventurous, and nonetheless completely unromantic. It teases the imagination into elaborating the unheard-of, and is nevertheless actually without secrets. What we are trying to perceive here, however, was said best and most beautifully by far by Leibniz himself, when he wrote to Queen Sophie Charlotte,

³⁹ Gerhardt IV. 499 (Cassirer-Buchenau II. 411).

Here, in a few words, is all my philosophy, somewhat popular, no doubt, since it does not, after all, contain anything which does not answer to what we experience, and since it is based on two sayings as common as that of the Italian theater, that *everywhere else it is just like here*, and that other of Tasso, that *that through which nature varies is beautiful*, which seem to contradict each other, but which one must unify by comprehending the one as the basis of things, the other as that of affections and appearances.⁴⁰

Critical Note No. 1

This typical direction of thought demands a fundamental illumination. In it there functions the generic concept "sequence", which remains inexplicit, and which must be differentiated into two species, first, the sequence of numbers, which is not a chronological succession, and second, the sequence of perceptions which represents a chronological succession. To the first species, the sequence of numbers, a certain property is ascribed, namely, that it falls under that rule. And it is maintained that precisely this property also belongs to the second species. Now the latter cannot be exhibited directly in the sequence of perceptions itself and can thus only be regarded as inferred; and I ask, therefore, under what conditions alone — which, admittedly remain inexplicit in Leibniz — it can be declared to be validly inferred. Such an inexplicit anticipation must be underlying, because otherwise Leibniz could be accused of concluding directly from the fact that a certain property belongs to one species that it also belongs to a coordinate species. As far as logic is concerned, the situation is no different from the view that thought and intuition are species of the one genus "expression", beside, for instance, projection as a coordinate species of the same genus. That the projection "expresses" the projected structure in a definable way can be directly shown and can thus be regarded as a property of the same. But that thought and intuition "express" their objects in the same sense, that, therefore, the property of projection also belongs to them, cannot be directly shown, just as little as it could be directly shown that the chronological succession of a monad's perceptions fall under a sequence rule. The question arises here, as well, under what conditions alone the inference would be valid; what conclusion would in the first place justify presenting thought and intuition, on the one hand, and projection, on the other, as coordinate species of one genus called "expression". And there now follows an insight which is, at first sight, surprising: these conclusions would be valid only under the condition that the mathematical forms (for instance, the non-chronological sequence of numbers and the projec-

⁴⁰ Gerhardt III. 348.

tion of a geometrical structure), their species differences notwithstanding, at the same time represent the genus of those other non-mathematical forms — only under the condition, therefore, that these specific mathematical forms were the encompassing genus of themselves and the specific non-mathematical forms. The problem of philosophical comprehension — the problem of a philosophical method — is thus, by the very nature of the case, *so closely* bound up with the basic speculative-logical form that the latter even comes into effect, uncalled for, where a thinker, just like Leibniz here, believes himself to possess the truly universal not in the basic form itself, but in the seemingly so foreign realm of mathematical concepts. At the same time it does not appear to be the case that Leibniz can justify this — admittedly only very indirectly inferable — view, for it defines the encompassing universal, as noted earlier, in terms of the fact that what it encompasses is its opposite. On the other hand, it is not true, if I am correct, that the non-mathematical forms are the genuine opposite of the mathematical forms.

Critical Note No. 2

How Leibniz more precisely understands that continuous merging into each other of non-homogeneous mathematical elements which defines homogeneity can be seen from his famous “law of continuity”, according to which, for instance,

the law for the resting bodies is in a certain sense only a special case (quasi species) of the general rule for moving bodies. (*Mathematische Schriften*, vol. VII, p. 25. Cassirer-Buchenaу, vol. I, p. 63)

In this context Leibniz names rest — as an example — with a plainly speculative expression, the quasi-species *opposita* of motion. The law of continuity is valid, he says here, generally “whenever the genus ends in its, as it were, opposite species (quoties genus in quasi-speciem oppositam desinit)”. Interpretively to the point, Cassirer notes in his edition that what is meant thereby is

that the apparent antitheses...appear under the perspective of the principle of continuity merely as *quantitative* gradations of *one* and *the same* concept. Thus, for instance, in mechanics we form the generic concept of “the state of motion” of a body and demand that the general laws that we deduce for it apply equally in the case of a particular velocity as in that of rest.

About the matter itself the following needs to be said.

It is indeed correct that a body which is at rest has the velocity zero; but the converse is not true, that a body whose instantaneous state of motion is characterized by the velocity zero is a body at rest. Thus, for instance, the motion of an oscillating body falls under the general law, according to which its velocity at the maximum of its

elongation is zero. It does not, however, follow from this that an oscillating body is one at rest. And in general: The derivative of a constant is zero. It does not, however, follow from this that the velocity of a moving body, the value of which, according to a law governing all states of motion of that body, is zero at a given point, is the velocity of a body of *constant* velocity. It is, therefore, if the occasion arises, indeed meaningfully possible to regard the state of motion of a body characterized by the velocity zero as a limiting case of its states of motion, but it is not possible to regard rest as the limiting case of motion. Rest and having velocity zero are not the same thing.

Directly into this context belongs a very characteristic polemical remark of Leibniz's against Descartes (*Math.* vol. IV. 385, Cassirer-Buchenau. vol. I. 324). Leibniz argues there against Descartes' proposition that rest is that mode of the body which forms the "greatest antithesis" to motion, and writes that he

would think that if a particular motion is given, the motion in the opposite direction forms a greater antithesis to it than rest....

Now, Leibniz is doubtlessly right insofar as, for instance, the movement of an oscillating body away from the equilibrium position and the movement towards it represent "a greater antithesis" than that between either of the movements and the state of motion at the reversal point of maximal elongation. Leibniz, however, has no right to conclude from this that the antithesis of rest and motion as opposite modes of a body is not the greatest one. This conclusion would only be valid if — as Leibniz thus obviously takes as his basis — resting and having velocity zero are the same thing.

The Leibnizian tendency is thus unmistakable. He wants, as Cassirer correctly says, to understand the antitheses "as quantitative gradations of one and the same higher concept". The principle of continuity does indeed, when one uses it in this Leibnizian way, change "all absolute antitheses into relative ones" — as W. Wundt puts it, in his *Leibniz* (Leipzig: Kröner, 1917), 35. Leibniz wants to replace the basic speculative form with the principle of continuity, and of the many sides of the latter, this is the questionable one. For this substitution is only seemingly successful, by virtue of the quasi-metaphysical introduction of the mathematical point as "something moveable", and finally, therefore, by virtue of the metaphysical concept of the homogeneity of the non-homogeneous mathematical elements. If it were really true that a mathematical point could move itself, then the ground would indeed be cut out from underneath the possibility of distinguishing between resting and having the velocity zero. This continuous change, however, by virtue of which these non-homogeneous mathematical elements are supposed to be

thought of as merging into each other, is in truth not a genuine change, not a genuine becoming, not a "transition in nature", which alone, at bottom, Leibniz wants to place under the principle of continuity. The philosopher Leibniz only apparently succeeds at the mathematization of metaphysical contents — and the relation of genuine opposites is a metaphysical content — by the circuitous route of an illegitimate metaphysicalization of in themselves merely mathematical relations. If one were to take this notion to its logical conclusion, there would result something unacceptable precisely also to the philosopher Leibniz, namely, that the discrete, thus the In Itself, and finally thereby the subject, could, by virtue of the "continuous change", merge into the continuous, into appearance, and thus into the object.

TRANSLATION NOTES

ⁱ The translations of Leibniz are by the translator, from the Gerhardt edition. Since, however, König bases his arguments on the German Cassirer-Buchenau edition, he has attempted, when appropriate, to incorporate the idiosyncracies of this edition.

ⁱⁱ This is the translation of "*übergreifend*" which dissatisfies the translator least, but it by no means catches the very visual sense of an almost physical "reaching-or-grabbing-out-over" that the German word contains. "Encompassing" should be understood, therefore, as an almost active process.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE INTERESTS
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR ETHICS*

Günther Patzig

Translated by Eric Miller

The topic of my lecture today is from the domain of practical philosophy. Ever since Aristotle introduced this name, it has remained controversial whether it signifies a theory *of* praxis, that is, retrospective reflection in the sense of Hegel's Owl of Minerva, which begins its flight only at dusk, or if it signifies a theory *for* praxis, an anticipating reflection. It is certainly in the latter sense that Marx understood his eleventh thesis against Feuerbach, according to which philosophers had up until then only variously interpreted the world, while what was actually important was to change it. Unfortunately, however, this Marxian thesis, even though oft-quoted, is itself ambiguous and thus just as much in need of interpretation as was previously the world. Should, according to Marx, the erstwhile interpreters of the world now undertake the changing themselves, or is the

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In this lecture the author tries to show that the distinction between "subjective" and "objective" interests has for ethics importance. L. Nelson is referred to as a philosopher who says this clearly; his solution to the problem, however, is shown to be defective. Starting from Nelson's ideas, the author develops some rough guidelines for distinguishing merely subjective interests of individuals and groups of people from their objective ("real") interests: The burden of proof rests with those who want to discount given subjective interests or to vindicate objective interests where subjective interests are lacking. There are, in fact, clear cases of divergence of objective and merely subjective interests. In spite of recurring attempts to do just this, it is argued that we cannot rightly identify subjective with individual and objective with collective interests (as Plato and some Marxist thinkers have done).

class of philosophers to be replaced by that of the revolutionists? Or should, according to Marx, the philosophers merely determine the principles with regard to which *others* can or should change the world or, more precisely, in an admittedly limited – very limited – sense, human social structures?

The relation between philosophy and praxis, in particular the relation between philosophy and politics, has remained problematic up to the present day. We shall return to this issue once more at the end of our deliberations. Just now I should like to offer, simply as my personal opinion, that the influence of philosophy upon praxis can be only indirect, but that it is not therefore any less important than if its influence were a direct one. "Important" is a carefully chosen expression here, which covers both favorable and deleterious effects of considerable consequence. In his work of 1795, *On Eternal Peace*,¹ Kant gave, with matchless conciseness, the reasons why a personal union of philosopher and king, which Plato had conceived as ideal, is neither possible nor even desirable. The public utterances of the philosophers are, nevertheless, indispensable for "the elucidation of the business" of the political actors. Kant says "elucidation" here, not guidance. The politicians should not expect to receive from philosophical discussions instructions on how to act. What philosophy can offer is clearness of principles and a perspective upon the competing points of view, which can make the political decisions more transparent. For several years now the talk of a "deficit in theory" for political praxis has been widespread in our country. Particularly the politicians themselves complain that, under the pressure of burgeoning daily business, they can find no time to think about fundamental questions, and that politics becomes somewhat rushed and short-sighted. One can hardly deny that this diagnosis is justified. But the question of the therapy remains open. Certainly the deficit in theory complained about would not be obviated merely by grasping any old theory whatever as the foundation for one's world-view, some theory which comprehends the realities only one-sidedly and has not been empirically verified, and making it into the no longer revisable foundation and premise for political decisions. The effects of such procedures, that is, ideologically fixed policies, are certain to be far more dangerous than the disadvantages of a so-called "pragmatism" which is oriented along the wide-spread opinions of common sense, and which tries to find concrete solutions for constantly recurring problems, to which problems belong particularly the unexpected side-effects of previously enacted measures.

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Werke*, ed. by Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. (Berlin: Reimer, 1900–), VIII. 369.

On the other hand, if one of the main tasks of politics is to adjust social institutions to the changing real conditions by means of appropriate reforms, one needs principles that will let the changes appear in a meaningful light. Political actors should try to develop clear notions of how human beings should behave toward one another, and to what degree it is the duty of politicians to expand, for instance, the opportunities of the life of the individual and to mitigate, at least, the naturally given inequalities among men.

It is my opinion that the function of practical philosophy can only be to elucidate the context of the discussion in which such questions of principle must be debated, to unravel conceptual confusions and to put overhasty simplifications into question. To illustrate this with an example which has once again acquired an unexpected timeliness: The problems of the justification of punishment by the state, in particular the question of the permissibility of the death penalty, have meanwhile been so thoroughly discussed by specialists among the philosophers, particularly in English-speaking countries, that all significant arguments *pro* and *con* can now be clearly surveyed. A rational decision would be one which results from a weighing of these arguments, and in which, however, an element of free choice remains indispensable. If the public discussion is followed, however, one gathers the impression that, under the influence of strong emotions, long-exposed conceptual confusions and oft-analysed illusory arguments still rule the day. Practical philosophy cannot presume to present final and unambiguous solutions: it cannot, therefore, relieve the politicians and others who have to make important decisions of the need to make these decisions. It can, however, significantly improve the rationality of the decision procedures.

Now, to come to my actual theme, I would like to introduce a few presuppositions, which seem well-founded to me, but the arguments for which I cannot develop extensively here. What I shall present, therefore, is deserving of your interest only insofar as you are prepared, at least hypothetically, to go along with my presuppositions.

The first premise is as follows: The current situation in the philosophical discussion is marked by the fact that the long dominant view that only metaethical questions can be rationally discussed whereas concrete norms can only be the expression of emotional attitudes and mirror collective, historically explicable beliefs of particular societies, has proved to be untenable. Scientifically respectable are not only language-analytic investigations of the logical status of normative propositions, on the one hand, and empirical investigations of the genesis and establishment of social norms for behavior in actual societies, on the other hand. Even the contents of the norms themselves and the justification strategies

which are used to give reasons for them can be subjected to rational discussion, in which at least a difference between better and more weakly founded, or rather foundable, norms can be worked out.

The second premise is a *methodological* one: A theory for justifying moral norms is the more plausible the more it leads us, in the application to characteristic particular cases, to results which seem evident to us, that is, agree with our intuitive moral judgment. This methodological presupposition differs from so-called ethical intuitionism, particularly as represented by G. E. Moore and W. D. Ross, by not laying claim to any evidence which would make such particular moral judgments immune to revision. The possibility should not be excluded that we reexamine and, in some cases, change our moral appraisal of a particular situation if it comes into contradiction with an otherwise well-founded theory. The point of view that we must proceed from our moral judgments acquired by judging in concrete instances (without, however, treating them as sacrosanct) conforms in the main to the methodical principles which Aristotle follows in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is used by John Rawls in his important book *A Theory of Justice* under the name of "reflective equilibrium"² Nicholas Rescher, too, uses the agreement with such "intuitive" judgments as a test of the acceptability of particular varieties of utilitarian theories.³ He refers to corresponding utterances by W. D. Ross and H. Sidgwick, who, admittedly (as intuitionists in the strict sense), advocate the view that such intuitive judgments are final, fixed data, whereas we wish to claim merely that they form the most reliable point of departure that we can find. Since, in appraising moral theories, many other authors, who do not raise this procedure to a methodological principle, also call upon the agreement of these theories with our judgments in particular instances as a criterion for their plausibility (the radical utilitarian J. J. C. Smart is an interesting exception), I shall assume that there is considerable consensus here. Taken for itself, such a consensus is, of course, by no means an argument for the correctness of a so commonly held view. There are after all such things as fads in philosophy. Nevertheless, such a consensus can serve as an indication that in any case it should, for trial purposes, be rewarding to proceed on the basis of this view.

If we do this, the third premise from which I should like to proceed results immediately and without restrictions. Once we have assumed that our judgments in particular instances may be considered as criteria for the acceptability of moral theories, there are

² John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 46-53.

³ Nicholas Rescher, *Distributive Justice* (Indianapolis-New York-Kansas City: Irvington, 1966), 18ff.

very good reasons for the view that at least some elements of utilitarianism and some elements of a theory of universalization in Kant's sense are needed to reconstruct moral intuitions satisfactorily. In recent decades various authors have advocated the view that only those ethical theories which permit a combination of utilitarian and formal (Kantian) views have any promise.

Kant's doctrine of the categorical imperative may, especially in our country, be considered the paradigm of an ethical theory which raises the universalizability of behavioral maxims to a norm. To choose only maxims which can serve as a foundation of a universal law means to act rationally; and this again means that, in choosing our maxims, we must abstract from the particulars of our individual empirical existence. It is rational to tell the truth because successful lying is possible only in a society in which lying is not the general behavioral norm. It is rational to keep a promise because promises would no longer be accepted in a society in which promises were generally broken. Someone who acts immorally wants to use the discipline of moral behavior which is customary in a society to his own advantage, but simultaneously be himself freed from the discipline of such behavior, the general observance of which is what guarantees the success of his behavior in the first place.

Thus the argumentation for Kant's so-called "irremissible duties". For the "duties of virtue", such as the precept to help one's fellow man when he is in need, an analogous consideration is appropriate. No one could wish to live in a world in which the needy are neglected; for the possibility of suffering belongs plainly to the empirical existence of every human being. He who expects help, but is not prepared to give any, acts irrationally *eo ipso*. But also he who, in the confidence that things will always go well for him, refuses to assist his needy fellow man as a behavioral maxim acts irrationally, since he makes the choice of behavioral rules dependent upon the merely contingent fact of his own favorable situation. Among moral theoreticians today there is extensive agreement that a universalizability proviso must be an important element of every adequate moral code. This was the intention of the "golden rule", which has been famous since antiquity, and which is often equated with the categorical imperative, but which is more concerned with *reciprocity* than *universalizability*, and which, besides, works with the inexact and subjective criterion of whether the given agent would *wish* to be in the role of the patient of his actions. The golden rule, for example, would obviously allow a masochist to treat others sadistically. Kant's (superior) criterion is the question of whether one *could* rationally *want* everyone to act in the manner in which one wants to act oneself — and there the empirical context, the wishes and dislikes of the

individual, is precisely that from which one abstracts. Exactly in this lies the significant improvement of Kant's notion over the golden rule, an improvement which Kant never tired in emphasizing, without, admittedly, finding general concurrence on it.

The generality clauses put forward by various writers — rules of fairness, for instance, by Rawls, here, by the way, with explicit reference to Kant, or the universalizability thesis of R. M. Hare⁴ — have the same function, namely, to ensure that morally relevant decisions are made free from personal and subjective prejudice, that is, free from bias and justly. It will have no unfavorable consequences for our considerations if we summarize these various conceptions, as great as their particular differences may be, under the aspect that they all demand that morally relevant principles of decision can be generalized. I note in passing that in *Freedom and Reason* Hare expresses the view that his universalizability thesis is not a moral, but rather a logical principle, even though his application of it has consequences for morally relevant activity. Similarly, Rawls seems to see one merit of his *Theory of Justice* to be that it explains a basic concept of morality, namely, the concept of justice, by means of the rationality of decisions in a hypothetical situation, his now famous "Original Position under the Veil of Ignorance". This opinion of both authors does not seem to be to the point: In a situation which does not coincide with a hypothetical "original position", it is a *moral* precept to decide as if one were in this original position — which is, among other things, characterized by the condition that no one knows which individual role will befall him in society. It is also true for Hare that someone who meditates on his behavioral maxims must be prepared to accept consequences of this mode of behavior, which could result from the generalization of the maxims, for himself as well, as a person affected by such a mode of behavior. But that he should also consider consequences which could fundamentally never affect him can only be interpreted as an independent moral precept. According to Hare, for instance, a man could with rational consistency advocate maxims for behavior which result in the disenfranchisement of women — the rare case of sex-change operations excluded for now. The universality of a maxim which extends beyond the possible circumstances of the agent himself needs to be secured by more than mere considerations of its consistency. We regard the principle of universalizability, therefore, as an undeniably *moral* precept.

⁴ R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963). Hare, too, says explicitly that his universalizability thesis is, at least in one of the possible interpretations, equivalent to the "golden rule" and holds Kant's categorical imperative to be a consequence of his universalizability thesis, expressing the opinion that his theory owes "a very great debt to Kant" (p. 34).

But is it sufficient? The unequivocal answer from the polyphonic discussion of Kant's attempt to found ethics upon the one categorical imperative says no. Kant's principle can indeed generate *prima facie* duties. These duties all amount to not giving oneself an advantaged position within the community of persons behaving on the basis of moral reflection. But every such *prima facie* duty can come into conflict with other duties, and then a principle for decisions has to be found which itself may no longer rest upon a mere consideration of its consistency. The expedient of establishing a *hierarchy* among moral duties, so that, say, the duty of truthfulness would, in every case, rank above the duty of active charity, but the development of one's own talents (to name as examples of duties only those discussed by Kant) below charity, quickly proves itself to be impracticable: We would not lie to help our friends out of a trivial embarrassment; but we would lie without hesitation, even if, one hopes, with regret, if that were necessary to save their lives. A government official who candidly tells the whole truth in answer to the unexpectedly penetrating questions of a television reporter can, as timely examples illustrate, do great harm. In cases of conflicts nothing can help us along but the careful weighing of interests (our own and the interests of those *immediately* affected by our mode of behavior, since no one can be held morally responsible for unforeseeable later consequences and side-effects). What is true for the categorical imperative is equally true, even if in different ways from case to case, for all other ethical theories which rightfully make a universalization principle the basis for founding moral norms: We need at least one further principle, which can be called upon as a criterion for weighing conflicting interests. This, then, is the domain in which the various utilitarian theories dominate the scene, rightfully and with good reason. For they can base themselves upon our intuitive conviction that human interests, needs, and wishes have, simply because they exist, a certain claim to satisfaction. In the impressive words of William James:

Take any demand, however slight, which any creature, however weak, may make. Ought it not, for its own sole sake, to be satisfied? If not, prove why not.⁵

The principle of a utilitarian theory of morally correct behavior can be expressed as follows: "An action is morally correct if it helps those immediately affected and, as far as can be foreseen, those indirectly affected to secure a maximal satisfaction of their needs,

⁵ William James, *Essays in Pragmatism*, ed. by A. Castell (New York: Hafner Pub. Co., 1948), 73.

wishes, and interests." Utilitarian principles can thus provide a criterion for deciding among conflicting *prima facie* duties, since they permit one to create a ranking of the interests affected by these duties. That a moral foundation based upon a universalization principle needs a supplementary theory which makes a defensible weighing of interests possible was, of course, resolutely rejected by Kant. To show this, one need merely refer to the dogmatic position in his late work "On an Alleged Right to Lie Out of Charity".⁶

Moral philosophers of our day, in so far as they recognize the universalizability criterion at all, are, nevertheless, fairly unanimously of the opinion that criteria for the weighing of interests which consider content must be added, the predominant opinion being that such an auxiliary theory should be oriented along utilitarian principles. Thus, for instance, William Frankena, in his book *Ethics*, says in conclusion to his lucid discussion of Kant's theory and of utilitarianism:

There are at least two basic and independent principles of morality, that of beneficence or utility, which tells us to maximize the total amount of good in the world, and that of justice.⁷

Correspondingly, we find the view expressed in R. M. Hare's *Freedom and Reason* that a connection between universalizability on the one hand and utilitarian points of view on the other is highly interesting for ethical theory, because we are here seeing the way prepared for a synthesis between two ethical points of view which were long considered contradictory. In this fashion a system of morality might come to be, which could please both Kant and the Utilitarians: Kant because of its form, the Utilitarians because of its content.⁸

It is indeed surprising how both those theoreticians of ethics who at first occupied themselves with the concept of generalization and its historically most important type, namely Kantian ethics, and those authors who started from the analysis of utilitarian theories have, almost as if by agreement, met at a position in the middle, which should not be called a compromise, but rather a synthesis. The Utilitarians, admittedly, have usually attempted to develop arguments according to which a fairness consideration — in the sense of a principle of universalizability, which not only makes the maximization of the satisfaction of the needs the goal of all activity, but also

⁶ Kant, VIII. 435-40.

⁷ W. K. Frankena, *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 35.

⁸ Hare, 123-24.

insists that justice in the distribution of advantages and disadvantages weigh just as heavily — can be introduced into the utilitarian framework without exceeding its limits. This is achieved by a second-order consideration of utility: Neglect of the legitimate claims and rights of individuals in the competitive common weal and all too obvious inequality in regard to social opportunities and advantages would, because of the emotional reaction of troubled insecurity or indignation among the disadvantaged, so seriously affect the total amount of happiness in the community that the principle of justice has to be observed out of utilitarian considerations as well. Since I have occasionally advocated this view in the past,⁹ I should like to use this opportunity for a correction and retraction. Even if human beings were to accept such injustices without emotion, such a situation would not be morally justifiable; that it has unfavorable consequences from a utilitarian standpoint and unfavorably affects the balance of happiness in the community is inessential to moral judgment, although it naturally exacerbates the matter. It seems to me, therefore, that a principle of justice cannot be worked into a utilitarian conception without going beyond the domain of utilitarianism.

Possibly the clearest conception of a foundation of moral norms that mirrors this duality of the relevant points of view is the foundation for ethics provided by Leonard Nelson, the fiftieth anniversary of whose death was commemorated in November, 1977, with an international philosophical symposium in Göttingen. In an interesting lecture at this symposium, R. Alexy pointed out the surprising agreement, indeed, one must almost say, the identity, between Nelson's conception and the theory developed by Hare.¹⁰ Like Hare, Nelson has made a consideration of generalization the basis of moral reflection. His "law of weighing" is as follows:

Never behave in such a way that you could not also agree to your mode of behavior if the interests of those affected were also your own!¹¹

To this principle of "abstraction from numerical particularity", as

⁹ Günther Patzig, "Plädoyer für utilitaristische Grundsätze in der Ethik", *Neue Sammlung* 13 (1973), 488-500, esp. 499. Differently and, as it seems to me now, more correctly, in Günther Patzig, *Ethik ohne Metaphysik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 52-61.

¹⁰ R. Alexy, "R. M. Hare's Regeln des moralischen Argumentierens und L. Nelsons Abwägungsgesetz", in *Vernunft Erkenntnis Sittlichkeit*, ed. by Peter Schröder (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1979), 95-122.

¹¹ Leonard Nelson, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1917). 2nd edition in, Leonard Nelson, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 9 vols., ed. by P. Bernays et al. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1964-), IV. 133.

Nelson calls it¹² — whose suggestion of the formulation of Kant's categorical imperative is, of course, intentional — a further principle must, according to Nelson, be added, one which makes possible the hierarchization of the conflicting interests entering into the situation. According to him, one is hypothetically to think of the manifold interests of the persons affected by one's mode of behavior as unified in one's own self and then to make the most important interests and their realization the basis of one's own behavior. Such a procedure leads to acceptable results only when one proceeds not from the empirically given strength of the particular interests, but from their "value". In considering the value of such an empirically given interest, one finds the true strength of the interest, or the true interest, which corresponds precisely to the value of the object toward which the interest is directed. Nelson illustrates this with an example which again corresponds, in a quite surprising way, to an example discussed by Hare in the same context: Two persons living in adjacent rooms, A and B, come into a conflict of interests because A would like to play music while B is having an unimportant, but loud conversation with a friend. In Hare's example, one neighbor wishes to hear classical music on his stereo, the other to play jazz on his trumpet.¹³

Now, whereas Hare suggests that the neighbors should agree upon times during which they can each pursue their respective hobbies undisturbed, Nelson sees a different solution as obvious. Since playing music is a more valuable activity than conversation, the interests of B must give way to the interests of A. On the path to an appropriate decision about priorities, the empirically given strength of an interest must be reduced (or augmented) to the strength which corresponds to the value of the interest. Nelson calls this principle that of "abstraction from the deficiencies of reflection, or, in short, the principle of reduction of interests".¹⁴ Not the subjective but the objective interests must be weighed against each other if an acceptable solution for the conflict of interests is to be found. In what manner, however, is this reduction of interests to be undertaken, or, more simply, how can one determine what is an objective, true interest, and what strength is appropriate to it? Here Nelson takes refuge — that is how one would have to express it — in an idealization:

The preferability of one interest vis-à-vis conflicting ones is determined by the relative strength of the interest that a perfectly educated person would

¹² Nelson, IV. 518.

¹³ Hare, 112.

¹⁴ Nelson, IV. 528.

have in its satisfaction, if by a perfectly educated person someone is meant who on the one hand possesses perfect insight, and on the other hand always prefers that which has been recognized as more valuable to that which has been recognized as less valuable.¹⁵

This construction reminds one of J. S. Mill's man who is experienced in all pleasures, who is familiar with both poetry and push-pin and therefore knows that reading poetry is to be preferred to playing push-pin. It is also open to the same methodological and material objections. Who decides, we ask again, who is a perfectly educated person? Can we establish this in any other way than by examining whether a person's value judgments do indeed assign the appropriate strength to the true interests? For then we would be moving in a circle, or we would need another perfectly educated person to tell us who may be considered a perfectly educated person, and we would be in an infinite regress. Besides, for the matter itself, it would not be very plausible that the verdicts of such a person should define the preferability of interests. According to my intuition at least, it makes absolutely no difference whether I disturb my neighbor with "The Art of the Fugue" or with <"Guys and Dolls"> nor whether he happens to be reading Goethe or Raymond Chandler. Today we would call Nelson's point of view "elitist", and rightfully so; and, given what I know about Nelson, it would not surprise me if it turned out that, in conceiving of the "perfectly educated person", he was above all thinking of Leonard Nelson himself.

This attempt to distinguish between subjective and objective, between illusory and true interests is thus a failure; yet I have not introduced Nelson's theory in order to criticize what has already been criticized by others, but rather because I believe that his writings, which, to the detriment of the discussion, have long been neglected, contain certain important insights that can lead to progress in the debate. I believe that it is just as important as it is correct that, in weighing interests in a conflict situation, we do not always and not only proceed from the subjective strength with which these interests are felt by the subject. For otherwise, to state the issue in Nelson's impressive words, "the most inferior need would not be excluded from a claim to satisfaction, were it only to occur with sufficient voraciousness."¹⁶ Beside the problematic case of distinguishing between "crude" and "refined" needs, Nelson discusses the possibility of a theoretical error which can lie at the basis of a subjective interest, for instance, when someone desires a particular dish without

¹⁵ Leonard Nelson, "Die Theorie des wahren Interesses und ihre rechtliche und politische Bedeutung" (1913), in, Nelson, VIII. 3-26, esp. 13.

¹⁶ Nelson, VI. 315-16.

knowing that it contains dangerous poisons. True, objective interest presupposes complete information about all relevant circumstances. Even more important is Nelson's suggestion that there can also be objective interests which do not correspond to any subjective interests, but which nevertheless deserve consideration. His example is that of a spoiled child, who is held in the most benevolent dependency by his parents, whereby they, in fact, prevent the child from becoming independent, indeed, even from developing the wish to be independent. Here, the parents are obviously acting against the *true* interests of the child, even if no subjective interest whatever corresponds to it.

The consideration of these cases shows us that no theory of weighing interests can bring us very far if it limits itself to stating the merely factual empirical wishes and interests of the person involved in each instance and to developing a procedure for maximizing the satisfaction of the needs, interests, wishes, and preferences of the persons involved. Some kind of a "reduction" of given interests to true interests, of subjective interests to objective interests, seems to be necessary. But how can one lay the basis for a procedure which could deserve our trust? The *perfectly educated person*, to whom Nelson wanted to assign the chore of reducing interests, is a chimera, or, if he were to appear in reality, a false prophet or a dictator. Is there another solution? This question has, of course, become a difficult problem in practical philosophy only since the classical theories of "the good", the highest goal of human activity, proved to be dogmatic speculations. For Plato the distinction between true and false, subjective and objective interests of man was, as the argumentation particularly in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* shows, not especially difficult. The primary interest of the individual human being was in the health of his soul. This again consisted in the order and harmony of the forces of the soul, that is, in justice. The highest goal of all human activity lay, therefore, in the preservation of "spiritual health", and this included, in any case, that the public good of the *polis* was to be preferred in every instance to the particular interest of the individual. In contrast to this, the interest in bodily well-being was considered of merely secondary importance. An objective ranking of goods, independent in particular of desire or aversion, was given by the nature of the matter. It was apprehended by the philosophers, and it was the task of the law-giver to order social questions in accord with it. For Plato, the life of the individual was only of value as long as he could perform his function for the good of the whole.¹⁷ Things are similar with the admittedly more plausible, if

¹⁷ Here we need only regard the passage in the *Republic* III, 406, in which Plato criticizes the behavior of people who, although continually sickly, reach an advanced age by

nonetheless still dogmatic, theses of Aristotle, according to which the highest goal of human activity consists in the achievement of *eudaimonia*, which in its turn is defined as the exercising of the specifically human faculties, namely, the use of reason both in theory and in political *praxis*. This conception cannot survive without the dogmatic presupposition that there is a highest natural purpose, according to which each creature should develop its peculiarities as perfectly as possible, and that man, as the rational creature, is obliged to represent and realize this, his characteristic, as purely as possible.

With his principle of reduction of interests, therefore, Nelson called attention to a problem which urgently awaits a satisfactory solution, since we can call upon neither Plato's dogmatic doctrine of the good (nor similar notions) nor the judgments of the perfectly educated person for distinguishing true from false interests, nor can we, in weighing our interests, rely upon a liberalistic *laissez faire* viewpoint which takes the rank luxuriance of empirically given interests at, so to speak, moral face value.

Even for the on the whole essentially trust-inspiring utilitarian conceptions, the problem arises with undiminished acuteness. Bentham's original version of Utilitarianism, in its archaic primitiveness, saw the amount of *pleasure* as that which was to be maximized by morally relevant behavior, irrespective of the object of pleasure at any given time, whereas J. S. Mill wanted to take into account not only quantitative but also qualitative distinctions among pleasures. We have, however, not been able to overcome the fundamental and manifest difficulties with regard to the possibility of quantifying and comparing pleasures. Moreover, the prohibition, for instance, against killing cannot be adequately secured by hedonistic-utilitarian arguments: There are doubtless cases in which the (painless) killing of a human being could considerably improve the balance of happiness and unhappiness in the world. Thus our immediate intuitions in regard to the right of each person to his own life cannot depend upon such considerations as to the effect of one's life upon the amount of happiness in the world.

These are some of the main reasons why the advocates of a utilitarian viewpoint have turned away from these notions and no longer proceed from pleasure or happiness as quantifiable masses, the maximization of which, either in the aggregate, or (because of demographic-political aspects) in the average amount per person for the

means of precautionary measures and diet, which Plato calls a "protracted dying". In contrast to them he offers the model of a craftsman who has no time for illness, and who instead of taking long cures simply lets it happen, whether he dies soon or nature herself helps, since a life that is not filled by work has no value for him anyway. The inhumanity of this passage is mitigated by the fact that it may safely be assumed that Plato would have unhesitatingly applied this maxim to himself, had he fallen into such a condition, instead of living — by all appearances, continually in the best of health — for eighty years.

groups coming into play, forms the respective goals of actions. They proceed, rather, from the *preferences* of the particular individuals, although these preferences need by no means be oriented solely toward pleasure or happiness. The role of the utilitarian criterion for behavior is performed by the deliberation about which mode of behavior is in a position to fulfill as many of these preferences as possible, ordered according to their urgency. This viewpoint is the one which would best satisfy our democratic and liberal tendencies. We would like to see all members of a community, even if they should not be competent and self-reliant (*mündig*) in the literal sense, treated nevertheless as mature advocates of their own interests. Everyone, so it seems to us, would then have to take the risk that he might be pursuing interests which could, if they were satisfied, prove to be unfavorable, even dangerous for him. It would also be in accordance with a liberal point of view to say that every person can best judge for himself what is good for him, and that thus the free interplay of subjectively felt and advocated interests is still the most trustworthy way of bringing about an improvement in the "quality of life" — to finally introduce officially the expression that has for some time now been waiting, as it were, in the wings. This point of view, however, is obviously too good to be realistic. We are reminded of Nelson's thesis that there are also objective interests which are subjectively stunted or repressed. We are also familiar with very passionate, but objectively unjustifiable interests which rest upon factual error, as well as upon psychological influence, fads, peer pressure, or conscious manipulation. These are interests <some of> which one would even have to call addictions. In our western industrial society, even those who may not need an automobile may nevertheless often have a lively interest in acquiring one, simply because in our society one cannot attain to the proper status without one. And it cannot be denied that commercial advertisement or political indoctrination can generate interests that have nothing to do with the real needs of those who, in the end, really do feel and advocate those interests.

I would like to describe the dilemma revealing itself here in the words of Dan W. Brock, in his superb report "Recent work in Utilitarianism",¹⁸ for it seems to me that it would be difficult to find a better formulation:

A person's values, which are expressed or found in preferences, are the product of various biological needs and the socialization process by which he or she is inducted into a society, state, and various social groups. They are importantly determined by and will tend to reflect and reinforce the existing social arrangements, power and authority relations, and expectations in his environment during this process. Consequently, a moral

¹⁸ *American Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (1973), 241-76.

theory that requires maximum satisfaction of preferences as they exist, in turn serves to reinforce the existing social structure; it has a strong conservative bias. Any alternative to this approach ultimately requires a substantive theory of value which asserts that some states of affairs are valuable for X whether or not they are in fact valued or preferred by X.... The attractiveness of such an approach is that it does not bind one to values expressed in the existing social structure and does not ascribe moral value to the satisfaction of existing preferences, no matter what they may be and how they may have been formed or manipulated. Its principle drawback is as evident as its advantage — who is to define, and how, what is valuable, to be preferred, etc.? This approach too easily leads to the view that some people know what is good for other persons better than those other persons themselves do, with its all too familiar and unsavory social and political associations.¹⁹

Here, we face a threatening dilemma indeed. Either, on the one hand, we make, in an authoritarian fashion, our own standards of value absolute, or, on the other hand, we practice a feeble tolerance, declining to distinguish between actual and merely imagined or manipulated needs. Now, since a decision among competing interests seems to be a necessary element of every promising theory of the foundation of moral norms, we cannot avoid the problem but must deal with it.

I would now, in the final part of my lecture, like to indicate at least a few viewpoints which might bring us nearer to a solution to these difficulties. My basic thesis will be as follows: Interests and needs need not, just for the reason that they are found or are not found in someone, already be taken into account or not be taken into account. The presence of a subjective need, however, is at least *prima facie* an indication that there might be an objective interest; the absence of the subjective needs seems *prima facie* to indicate the absence of the respective objective interests. The burden of proof, accordingly, lies with the person who wants to diverge in his decisions from the given state of needs and interests.

To illustrate this, let us take up again the examples brought up by Nelson: The interest in a meal is proven to be merely subjective and not to be taken seriously by showing that the person in question does not know a certain fact that would immediately make his interest disappear, say, the fact that the dish is poisoned. That parents are obliged to take into account their child's true, objective interest in free self-determination and self-development, even if the child has no corresponding subjective interest, may be shown in the following manner: It is a fact of experience that adults value their independence once they have acquired it, and that the child, if it continues to be held in dependency, will at some point or other come to regard

¹⁹ Brock, 244-45.

the lack of independence, which will by then be difficult to eliminate, as a serious deficiency. Because it regularly tends to be this way in comparable cases, we may also assume that, in this particular case, it is in the true interests of the child not further to be benevolently made overly dependent.

The same can be said of the objective interest of someone who, in a state of depression or in an emotional trauma, wishes to take his own life. We do not concur with his momentary subjective interest, because we can show from experience that the vast majority of individuals prevented from committing suicide tend later to accept this interference in their freedom of action. We cannot appeal to an absolute value of human life here: In those cases in which someone can expect only agony from further life (as the result, say, of a terminal illness) and has no urgent duties that could oblige him to take this suffering upon himself, an obligation to prevent him from killing himself would be very problematical indeed.

A familiar, if indeed quite trivial case from communal politics is the following. When motorized traffic is barred from a so-called "pedestrian zone" in a city, the businessmen from the affected part of the city tend at first vigorously to protest the ordinance. When a municipal government, nevertheless, does not acquiesce to such a pronouncement of interests, it is justified in doing so for the reason that it can point to the experience that in comparable cases the interests change within a very short period of time. What the cases discussed up until now have in common is the following: The true or objective interest is precisely what, according to general experience, the person affected will be willing to make into his subjective interest once he has the appropriate information, or has overcome the passing emotional disturbance, or once the new situation has presented itself. It is also possible to introduce here the notion of a rational examination of the genesis of a collective or an individual interest. Many interests which are perceived as important can be reduced to collective decisions or even conditions of individual socialization, which in turn do not stand up to a questioning of their rational basis.

Nevertheless, this is not yet sufficient, and, of course, most particularly not if we think of a society's institutions, which are supposed to do justice to the interests of large groups of people and even of future generations. In such cases, democratic votes and opinion polls deliver only very fragmentary knowledge of the actual preferences of all individuals; for future generations this process is, of course, impossible anyway; and a successful rational examination of the factual genesis of needs and interests is likely to be possible in only the most favorable instances²⁰

Thus a "reduction of interests", in the sense of a weighing of pre-

ferences, can proceed only according to very schematic categories. Instead of procuring the agreement of individuals, as would be possible in the case of individual conflicts of interest, one will have to rely on empirical knowledge, which can provide information about which vital needs must in any case be fulfilled so that an individual can attain to that degree of vital well-being and efficiency which is a necessary precondition for responsible spontaneous activity (which serves the community, as well). Such primary needs are food, clothing, shelter, health care, and a standard of education and rearing adequate to the particular condition of the society. It seems evident to me that the state's obligation to take measures for needs going beyond these primary ones is substantially smaller. It is even a plausible opinion that such preferences which exceed the minimal standards should best be left to the initiative of the individuals and be publicly sponsored only if and insofar as their realization serves the common good as well.

I would like to note here that in the process of such considerations the problem also arises about the extent to which the wealthy industrial societies can be morally justified in ignoring the fact that large portions of the world's population outside these societies are far from having achieved those minimal conditions, the presence of which is, within these societies, generally accepted as the prerequisite for all further satisfaction or preferences. It is to be expected that this collective indifference and even ruthlessness will in the foreseeable future seem as astounding to the inhabitants of the earth then living as seems to us the indifference with which even morally sensitive Greeks and Romans accepted the condition of the slaves, and the European bourgeoisie at the beginning of the industrial revolution the condition of the industrial workers: as an inescapable fate, which, to be sure, always affected only others.

With the extension of the frame of reference for weighing interests beyond the limits of a society, it is obvious that considerable complications enter the picture, complications which increase even more if we also extend it to future generations. Here, too, we must make plausible a limitation of the satisfaction of the interests of those now living — out of consideration for the objective interests of our children and grandchildren. Given the uncertainty of long term predictions only very general rules can be obtained, and they will have to be limited to an assurance of primary needs, which also have absolute priority for those living now. Modes of behavior which would have

²⁰ On the concept of factual and rational genesis, compare Paul Lorenzen and Oswald Schwemmer, *Konstruktive Logik, Ethik und Wissenschaftstheorie* (Mannheim-Vienna-Zürich: Bibliographisches Institute B. I. Wissenschaftsverlag, 1973), and R. Alexy, *Theorie der juristischen Argumentation* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1978).

the very probable consequence of infringing upon or even destroying the *necessary conditions for the very existence* of future generations would, from this point of view, have to be considered absolutely unacceptable.

It is from an analogous point of view that one should judge the argument, presented by advocates of a revolutionary overthrowing of the existing social structures, that one is allowed to demand from the present generation the great sacrifices implied by violent revolutions, because they are as nothing compared with the amount of suffering a maintenance of capitalistic economic structures within parliamentary democracies would accumulate over the generations, not to mention compared with the happiness of unlimited self-realization that members of a classless society would in the long run be able to enjoy. Against such assertions, which identify the "true" interests of the individual living now with his class interests (the priority of the collective interest — just as in Plato, and just as unfounded), and against a view which demands of the individual that he makes sacrifices even to the possible loss of his life, for the sake of the happiness of later generations, the following objections, above all, should be raised. First, it cannot be made plausible to anyone that the beneficent consequences ascribed to the revolution by its advocates are certain enough to offer an acceptable basis for a weighing of interests. Second, even if such an empirical prediction could be made sufficiently certain (which is not to be expected), it would still have to be noted that, even in this unlikely instance, the certain sacrifices and hoped-for benefits would affect two different generations. It would hardly be possible, however, to give a rational foundation for the claim that human beings could be obligated to sacrifice even their most elementary vital interests for the prospect of advantages *for others*. Only the individual himself may dispose of his own interests in this way, which, regarded rationally, would be an injustice against himself. Instead of such superficial solutions which postulate a future condition of such intense happiness that, in comparison with it, every sacrifice that must be made on the way appears as insignificant, a rational theory of weighing interests would contain a rather complicated evaluation procedure, with distinction of cases, categories of urgency, and considerations of what may be demanded from whom. But reality just happens to be fairly complicated, and even if our theories should not be just as complex as reality itself (for they would not be very helpful then), they must indeed be complicated enough adequately to reproduce the relevant distinctions of the domain dealt with. One has the impression that it is laziness, among other things, which makes radical, and that usually also means simple, theories so popular again these days.

In considering this, we should keep in mind that all attempts — as they have been undertaken since Plato and are advocated these days by Marxist theorists in particular — to confound the meaningful and necessary distinction between subjective and objective (“true”) interests of individuals with the other, also meaningful, distinction between individual and collective interests (so that only those individual interests which coincide with class interests or even the interests of humanity count as “true” interests) amount to a dangerous conceptual confusion.

Every acceptable theory of moral judgment must rather take *three* dimensions of discussion into account which are not reducible to one another. First, there is the aspect of universalizability, which is expressed in the precept that no one may demand favored treatment for his interests, simply because they are *his* interests. Second, we have the aspect of the reduction of interests, which distinguishes between subjective and objective individual interests and determines the strength of the interests deserving consideration according to the urgency of the underlying objective needs. And finally the cardinal point, namely, the extent to which such objective individual interests may be realized under scarcity of resources. For the last question, the utilitarian criterion in regard to the maximal satisfaction of all objective individual interests is the most trustworthy point of departure, provided the interests of members of other societies and of future generations will be taken appropriately into account as well.

As far as the distinction between subjective and objective interests is concerned, our current state of knowledge is that we can see the problem clearly before us and, at the same time, we see the urgency and the difficulty of its solution. I have just now tried to sketch a few preliminary steps in the direction of such a solution. It is, I hope, not completely unfounded optimism if I, despite it all, believe I perceive already the crude outlines of a theory which, through the cooperation of many, could be turned into an instrument which in some not too distant future could, as an Ariadne’s thread, serve <even> the politicians in the labyrinth of conflicting interests.²¹

²¹ Since I wanted to demonstrate in this lecture the importance only of the question of the “true” interests for the foundation of ethics, let me refer to selected literature for further orientation on these problems: A. Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare* (San Francisco: Holden-Day, 1970); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971); John C. Harsanyi, *Essays on Ethics, Social Behavior, and Scientific Explanation* (Dordrecht: Reimer, 1976).

For information on the current state of the discussion, see the contributions under the theme “Social Ethics” in the first three issues of vol. 11 of *Erkenntnis* (1977), esp. the essays by Harsanyi, Stegmüller, Scanlon, v. Kutschera, Baier, and Sen.

REMARKS PERTAINING TO THE ANALYTIC DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM*¹

Friedo Ricken, S. J.

Translated by David J. Marshall jr.

In question 6 of his treatise on Evil,² Thomas Aquinas opens his discussion of the freedom of the will with an indication of the fundamental significance of the issue for our human existence and self-understanding: To negate the freedom of the will, he says, is to deny that human actions are deserving of reward or punishment and to destroy the very foundations of morality. Without freedom there is neither deliberation, nor admonition, nor command, punishment, praise nor blame. If the notion of freedom is bereft of meaning, so

* Translated from Friedo Ricken, S. J., "Zur Freiheitsdiskussion in der sprach-analytischen Philosophie", in *Theologie und Philosophie* 52. Jahrgang (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1977), pp. 525-42.

Above and beyond its significance for moral philosophy, the problem of freedom constitutes an approach to the question of the existence of God that withstood the critique of Kant. The author of the following contribution derives his orientation from the tradition of Aristotelian Thomism and from the philosophy of linguistic analysis. On the basis of the Kantian distinction between the comparative and the transcendental concept of freedom, he discusses analytic interpretations of the proposition "He could have acted otherwise", which gives expression to the consciousness of freedom in the sense of imputability. He arrives at the conclusion that this proposition cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of the comparative concept of freedom, which implies a deterministic position. With Thomas Aquinas, he sees the root of transcendental freedom in the power of reason to reflect upon its own judgment.

¹ Revised version of a paper read 21 Jan., 1977, at the academic convocation celebrating the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas at St. George's College of Philosophy and Theology, Frankfurt on the Main.

² *Quaestiones Disputatae*, ed. by R. M. Spiazzi (Turin: Marietti, 1949), "De malo", VI. c. p. 558.

are all other notions belonging to the language of morality. With these statements, Thomas lends expression to a conviction held by the generality of philosophers, a view common not only to Aristotle³ and Kant,⁴ but also to the ethics of linguistic analysis.⁵ The considerations that follow are concerned with the notion of freedom embodied in this latter philosophical tradition. Since the time of Plato, if not before, philosophers have again and again taken the view that the phenomenon of the moral is not confined to an arrangement of human social life, but points to a reality beyond the world of sense experience. The approach to metaphysics that follows the way of moral consciousness withstands even the critique of Kant. Hence the question of freedom is bound up with the question of a possible approach to metaphysics.

What is distinctive in the way *linguistic analysts* approach the issue of freedom? Ordinary language analysis, according to an utterance in which J. L. Austin characterizes his program, asks "...*what we should say when*, and ...*why*, and what we should mean by it."⁶ But it is not a question of words or meanings only, but also of "...the realities we use the words to talk about: we are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of...the phenomena".⁷ For this reason, Austin designates language analysis as "linguistic phenomenology".⁸ In language our moral consciousness becomes palpable. Our thought is in a language through the mediation of which alone we are able to communicate the contents of consciousness. Hence the analysis of moral language, in which usages and meanings are enquired after, is at the very least a first and ineluctable step on the way to an understanding of the moral phenomenon.

The phenomenon which linguistic analysis takes as a point of departure in its discussion of the notion of freedom is the sentence from ordinary language, "He could have acted differently". This sentence, which Kant also viewed as of great significance,⁹ expresses

³ *Nicomachean Ethics* III. 1109b30-1114b25, in *Ethics of Aristotle*, trans. Sir David Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

⁴ *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (KdpV), (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), A 167-179; or (*Critique of Practical Reason* (CPrR), trans. L. W. Beck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

⁵ For example P. H. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1954), pp. 270, 273f.

⁶ "A Plea for Excuses", in *Philosophical Papers of the late J. L. Austin*, ed. by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 181.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ KdpV (CPrR), A 167-179.

what ordinary language characterizes with words like freedom, responsibility, imputability. It says that the act was due to the agent alone; no other cause can excuse it. It is the undisputed assumption of language analysis that this sentence is *meaningful*; the controversy is centered on how it is to be taken. Basically there are two opposing positions, both anticipated in their essential characteristics by Kant.¹⁰

According to the one interpretation, the sentence has the meaning, "He could have acted otherwise if he had made a different decision". This view makes it possible to reconcile freedom with determinism. To say that an action is free is to say merely that its causes are internal to the agent. An action is free insofar as it follows the decision of the agent; but the decision itself is determined by his character, wishes and convictions, and these in turn by causes of psychological, sociological or some other nature. In the following, the notion of freedom embodied in this position will be designated, following Kant, as the comparative or psychological concept of freedom. According to Kant, an action is free in the comparative sense if it is brought about by "internal representations produced by our own faculties".¹¹

The opposing position takes the sentence to mean, "Given the same situation of the universe, of which his own character and the state of his rational faculties are a part, the agent could have decided to perform a different action". This interpretation is possible only if the decision is not the necessary consequence of previous events or conditions. Those who hold this position are divided as to whether freedom and determinism can be reconciled.¹² This notion of freedom will be designated, again following the Kantian expression, as freedom in the transcendental or cosmological understanding. With this expression Kant refers to the power of initiating a new state of affairs without being determined by conditions temporally antecedent that resulted from laws of nature.¹³

I

What reasons can be given to hold the comparative notion of freedom adequate for the interpretation of the assertion of imputability?

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., A 172.

¹² For a discussion of this point refer e.g. to W. K. Frankena, *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), pp. 57-62; or A. Kenny, *Will, Freedom and Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), chap. 8.

¹³ *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (KdV), (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968); or *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR), trans. N. K. Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), B 561.

G. E. Moore¹⁴ and P. H. Nowell-Smith¹⁵ are the two classical philosophers of the tradition of linguistic analysis who have adopted the view that it is; their argumentations have given rise to the subsequent discussion. I shall deal only with Nowell-Smith, whose analysis is the more detailed. The crucial point in his view is that he takes the sentence "He could have acted otherwise" as a *hypothetical* statement.¹⁶ "He could have acted otherwise if..." That he acted as he did is a necessary consequence of the conditions given; under other conditions he would have acted otherwise. According to Nowell-Smith an action depends on three types of conditions:

- 1) on the requisite ability. If Peter read *Buddenbrooks* last night, he could have read *The Magic Mountain*; but he could not have read the *Iliad* in the original because he doesn't know Greek.
- 2) on the requisite circumstances. Peter could not have read *The Magic Mountain* instead of *Buddenbrooks* if he had not had a copy available.

These two conditions offer no difficulty; nor do they distinguish the position of Nowell-Smith from that of others. Whether the concept of freedom advocated is the comparative or the transcendental one, the possibility of acting differently is always limited by the abilities of the agent and by the given circumstances. The controversial condition is the third one:

- 3) Given the ability and the requisite circumstances, Peter would have read *The Magic Mountain* last night if he had wanted to more than anything else. Hence "He could have acted otherwise" means "He would have acted otherwise if his character and inclinations had been different; but given the character that he has, he could not have". Whoever knows his own character sufficiently can predict his own actions. According to this view an action is free if it is not done from coercion, but arises from the character and inclination of the agent. This does not preclude its being determined by his character and inclinations. Nowell-Smith takes 'character' to mean the totality of those dispositions to action having both of the following characteristics: (1) They dispose the agent to perform the kind of actions that come under a value judgment, that is, that produce desirable or undesirable effects. (2) They can be influenced by pleasure and displeasure as well as by praise and blame.¹⁷

This short outline may suffice to make it clear that Nowell-Smith's

¹⁴ *Ethics* ((London: Oxford University Press, 1966), chap. 6.

¹⁵ Op. cit., chapters 19 & 20.

¹⁶ Op. cit., pp. 275-78 (Examples changed).

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 306; compare with pp. 297-306.

notion of character is fundamental to his position. This is the point at which a criticism may begin. In this connection it is of decisive importance to understand more precisely how Nowell-Smith envisages the influencing of character. Character, he tells us, can be modified by pleasure and displeasure, by reward and punishment, by moral approval and disapproval and by the hope or fear of these.¹⁸ These asseverations are unsatisfactory insofar as they do not distinguish different ways in which character can be influenced. Undoubtedly our dispositions to action can be altered by moral approval or disapproval, by physical pleasure or pain, and by reward or punishment. Of critical importance, however, for the issue of freedom and imputability is the particular way in which character is influenced by moral judgments. The context of the present study not permitting a detailed analysis, I shall merely indicate two ways in which the difference between influence by moral approval and disapproval on the one hand and by pleasure and displeasure on the other seems an essential one.

One difference stems from the fact that the way in which character is influenced by pleasure and displeasure is itself the object of moral approval or disapproval. Thus, influence by pleasure and displeasure on the one hand and by moral approval or disapproval on the other are on different levels. For example, we praise the right behavior of one who, in spite of fear, acts courageously, and we blame the wrong behavior of the one whose action is cowardly. This difference points to the fact that we are not determined with necessity by fear, pleasure and pain, but that we have within us the power to respond to them in different ways. This power is the premise upon which moral approval and disapproval are based.¹⁹ A second difference between moral approval and disapproval on the one hand and fear, pleasure and pain on the other flows from the fact that the former are bound up with a valuation or judgment of the agent, involving the assumption that he could have acted otherwise. They exert an influence on him only if he shares that assumption. This is particularly clear in the case of blame. Whoever is convinced that he could not have acted otherwise produces an excuse and rejects the blame as unjustified. Hence the argumentation of Nowell-Smith involves a circle: His interpretation of the sentence "He could have acted otherwise" has recourse to the notion of character; to define this notion, he appeals to the empirical fact that certain dispositions to action can be influenced by moral approval or disapproval. Hence

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 297-306 passim, esp. 303f.

¹⁹ Refer to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II. 1105b19-1106a14, also to the beginning of III. 1109b30.

the very sentence that moral approval and disapproval are now called upon to explain is one the understanding of which they were seen to presuppose.

There is, however, another criticism of Nowell-Smith's notion of character that is of far greater implication: It has been shown that to take "He could have acted otherwise" as hypothetical is to mistake its meaning. This gets to the fundamental supposition of the comparative notion of freedom, which was brought to light in a paper entitled "Ifs and Cans" read by J. L. Austin before the British Academy and published in 1965. Austin's views served especially M. R. Ayers²⁰ and A. Kenny²¹ as a basis for further developments. Austin showed first of all that any discussion of the hypothetical interpretation of the assertion of imputability must take stock of two possibilities which are not systematically distinguished by Moore and Nowell-Smith:

- 1) The assertion is to be taken as a conditional in the sense that an if-clause is to be added as a *complement*. On this view "He could have acted otherwise" means "He *could* have acted otherwise if...";
- 2) It is a conditional in the sense that it is shown by *analysis* to *be* a conditional. On this view "He could have acted otherwise" means "He *would* have acted otherwise if..."²²

Obviously the second of these positions is that of Nowell-Smith. The main point of Austin's criticism is that both positions overlook the distinction between a statement *about* conditions and a *conditional* statement.²³ There can be no doubt that the sentence "He could have acted otherwise" makes an assertion about conditions. But this does not mean that it is to be taken as a conditional. To say that he could have acted otherwise is to assert that all conditions necessary for a different action were fulfilled. But if the assertion is taken in either of the above mentioned interpretations, its meaning is the opposite. To say that he could or would have acted otherwise if all the necessary conditions had been fulfilled, is to imply that certain of the conditions were not fulfilled, so that the possibility of acting otherwise was *not* given.

Both of the above mentioned interpretations are open to criticism. The first, as Austin has shown,²⁴ is the result of a grammatical confu-

²⁰ *The Refutation of Determinism* (London: Methuen & Co.; New York: Barnes and noble, 1968), chap. 7.

²¹ Will, *Freedom and Power*, chap. 7.

²² *Philosophical Papers*, p. 221.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 225, 228.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

sion. Sentences in the past perfect subjunctive often appear in everyday language as the consequence of an antecedent conditional. For example, "He would have come home sooner last night" might be completed by "if he had not gotten into a traffic jam". But the past perfect subjunctive in the assertion states categorically that not every condition necessary to the action was fulfilled. Rather, as the interpretation of Ayers quite rightly shows,²⁵ it indicates that the possibility mentioned by the assertion was not actualized just as the subjunctive mood of a contrary-to-fact conditional indicates that the condition was not fulfilled. Logically therefore, the subjunctive mood of the assertion of imputability is without meaning. The proposition affirms categorically that a certain possibility is given. Its meaning would not be changed if, instead of a subjunctive, it were the indicative "He was able to act otherwise". From this it follows that "He could have acted otherwise if he had chosen" is a pseudo-conditional. Austin²⁶ has shown that the *if* in sentences like "I can if I choose" or "I could have if I had chosen" is not the *if* announcing a causal condition. From "I can if I choose", "I can whether I choose or not" and "I can" simpliciter can be deduced without any further premises. Given the *if* announcing a causal condition, neither inference is valid; on the contrary, this *if* justifies the inference that since the consequent proposition is not, in fact, the case, the antecedent proposition is also not the case. The conditional, "If the window had been hit by a stone, it would be broken" permits the inference, "It is not broken; therefore it was not hit by a stone". In the case of "I can if I choose", the analogous inference is not always licit. From "I can not do it", it does not follow that I do not choose. I can choose to do things that I find myself unable to do. It is sufficient for a decision that I think myself able, or that I wish to try and find out whether I am. It can easily turn out after I have decided to do something that I am, in fact, not able to do it.

This examination of the complementary hypothesis has led to the view that the assertion of imputability is to be understood as a categorical affirmation of a possibility. In his reply to Austin, Nowell-Smith conceded the point.²⁷ But that did not put an end to the controversy over the comparative and transcendental notions of freedom. This would require a further distinction not explicitly present in Austin. The phrase "to be able to act otherwise", as we have ta-

²⁵ Ayers, op. cit., pp. 123f.

²⁶ Austin, op. cit., pp. 209f.

²⁷ P. H. Nowell-Smith, "Ifs and Cans", in *Theoria* 26 (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 1960), pp. 85-101, 87, 93.

ken it so far, is ambiguous. It can mean (1) to be able to refrain from carrying out a particular external action or to carry out a different one; or (2) to be able to decide upon a different external action. The necessity of making this distinction is shown by the fact that a different decision may be possible even if a different external action is not. I can decide for or against an external action that I am unable to forego doing because, if I am coerced to it by external force, I can either acquiesce in it or refuse to. Furthermore, I can decide, as has already been observed, to perform an external action without being able to. Austin, as far as I can see, takes the assertion of imputability in the first of these two senses, the one compatible with the comparative notion of freedom. On this view the assertion of imputability requires the possibility of an external action. Austin observes quite rightly that this possibility is not conditioned by the decision. This leaves open the question whether the decision for that possibility is conditioned. The assertion of imputability is an unambiguous affirmation of freedom in the transcendental understanding only if the "can" is taken to mean "can decide otherwise", that is, if it is taken to assert categorically the possibility of a different decision. The question whether it is, in fact, to be taken in this way, lies beyond the purview of linguistic analysis.

The elimination of the complementary hypothesis leaves open the question whether a categorical assertion of possibility should be *analysed* as being hypothetical. According to this interpretation, "he could have decided otherwise" means "He would have decided otherwise if..." This too runs afoul of Austin's observation that the assertion of imputability is a categorical assertion to the effect that all the conditions required for a different action (or a different decision) were fulfilled. The conditional analysis, taking the proposition to mean that a condition necessary for a different decision was not fulfilled, would turn this assertion into its opposite.

This criticism of the conditional analysis may be completed with an observation especially concerned with the position of Nowell-Smith. According to this position, character, understood as a certain predisposition to act, is one of the conditions indissociable from the possibility of action. It is the consensus of linguistic analysts that dispositions have the logical status of conditional propositions. This interpretation renders the assertion of imputability vacuous or trivial. It would reduce to "If he had had a different character, he would, under the same circumstances, have decided otherwise". If "character" in this sentence is replaced by the appropriate conditional, we get 'If he had not been the kind of person who under particular circumstances decides in a particular way, he would not under these particular circumstances have decided in this particular way'. This

sentence is just as meaningless as "If the window were unbreakable, it wouldn't be broken".

II

It has been shown that the assertion of imputability need not be interpreted in accordance with the comparative notion of freedom. The possibility of taking it in accordance with the transcendental concept is at least an option. If "He could have acted otherwise" is taken to mean "He could have decided otherwise", the assertion of imputation must be taken to presuppose the transcendental concept of freedom. Whether this is, in fact, the correct interpretation can not, however, be decided by the methods proper to linguistic analysis.

Nowell-Smith presents two objections²⁸ to the transcendental notion of freedom that can serve as a basis for discussion.

1) This notion is unable to differentiate between a free action and a chance event. He asks what reason there is to treat an action unpredictable on the basis of the agent's character as belonging to the agent, and whether such an action should not rather be viewed as a chance event or a miracle. A proponent of the transcendental notion of freedom might reply to this objection by distinguishing between indetermination and self-determination. The question would then be how to define the notion of self. Nowell-Smith treats the self and the character as identical. An action is self-determined if it is determined by the motives and character of the agent and not forced by circumstances or by other persons.

2) The comparative notion of freedom, in contradistinction to the transcendental one, provides a criterion to determine which actions should be imputed to the agent and which should not. The criterion is the character. If, on the basis of his character, the agent has given in to the temptation to perform a bad action, then he is responsible for it; but if the temptation is beyond his power to resist, then he is excused.

To these objections it must be replied first of all that both issues can be settled without recourse to the notion of character. The answer to both is trivial: The action belongs to the agent and is to be imputed to him if he willed or intended it. The interpretation of this answer requires a clarification of the notion of will. This can be achieved on the basis of one of the most recent and detailed analyses of this concept in the entire area of linguistic analysis, provided by A. Kenny in *Will, Freedom and Power* (1975). The question is whe-

²⁸ *Ethics*, pp. 281-84.

ther this theory of the will can be reconciled with the possibility of freedom in the transcendental sense.

Kenny takes his notion of will from Thomas Aquinas:²⁹ Will is rational striving or the power of a human being to allow himself to be determined by reasons to perform an action. A human being, unlike an animal, can assign reasons for his behavior. To show that an action is either good in itself or a means to a good end is to give a reason for it. The Thomistic criterion of imputability is based on this concept of the will: An action belongs in the plenary sense to the agent if it not only takes its origin in the agent, but the agent consciously recognizes and assents to the purpose or end, as such, of the action and to the means, as such, appropriate to that end. Thomas designates such an action as voluntary in the proper sense of the word. Animals can recognize the purpose of an action, but not as such; for that reason their action may be called voluntary only in some improper sense of the word. Thomas uses 'intention' to designate the act of will that takes as its object both the end and the means necessary to the end.³⁰ Hence an action is voluntary in the measure in which it is intended. Following Aristotle and Thomas, Kenny³¹ identifies two criteria of an intended action: 1) The agent knows that he is performing the action; 2) he performs it because he wills it, either for its own sake or for the sake of another end.

These indications of the Thomistic concept of will may suffice to identify the problems it poses for the notion of imputability. We could argue with Socrates that when reasons determine an agent to perform an action, the action must always result from the best reasons of which he knows; hence evil is never done voluntarily, but is always the result of ignorance. Aristotle's position is more complex:³² Man can only do what he takes to be good; his choice is necessarily determined by his judgment of what is good. But he is not the master of this judgment; it is a function of his temperament, character, upbringing, the social conditions in which he lives, and so on. This is the problem treated by analytic philosophers when they ask whether reasons are causes that determine necessarily our actions.³³ But in these discussions the concept of cause is not the

²⁹ Refer to Kenny, op. cit., pp. 18-23; also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, edited by The Institute of Medieval Studies at Ottawa (Ottawa: Garden City Press, 1941), Ia IIae. 6. 2.

³⁰ *Summa Theologiae*, Ia IIae. 12. 5.

³¹ Kenny, op. cit., p. 56.

³² Refer esp. to *Nicomachean Ethics* III. 1113a15-1114b25.

³³ Refer, for example, to D. Davidson, "Actions, Reasons and Causes", in *The Philosophy of action*, ed. by A. R. White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), pp. 79-94; Davidson,

broad Aristotelian notion that includes the final cause or the purpose — in this sense Aristotle and Thomas also take reasons to be causes — but the more restricted concept of efficient cause in the sense of Hume and Mill. According to this, event or state A is the cause of event or state B if three conditions are fulfilled:³⁴

- 1) It is logically possible that A and B exist independently of each other;
- 2) It has been empirically ascertained that whenever there occurs an event of the type to which A belongs, another occurs of the type to which B belongs;
- 3) The general statement must make allowance for interference by other causes.

Those who take the standpoint of psychological determinism claim that to adduce a reason for an action is to give a causal explanation for it. The reason explains the action as the cause explains the effect. The concept of reason is defined in terms of two characteristics:³⁵ First, if someone acts for a reason, he has a pro-attitude toward actions of a certain kind (this attitude may include desires, wishes, moral principles, social conventions, and so on); second, he assumes that his action is of this kind. But if reasons are efficient causes in Hume's sense of the word, the assertion that someone acted for a particular reason carries the implication that whoever, having the same pro-attitude and making the same assumption, finds himself in the same circumstances will do the same. Those who defend this thesis are willing to concede that people often act at cross-purposes to their own reasons and that their actions are often unpredictable on the basis of their pro-attitudes and assumptions. Such occurrences, however, are not viewed as objections to the thesis; they are explained, just as are deviations from the laws of nature, in terms of interference.³⁶

In chapter XXII 6 of his treatise *On Truth*, Thomas Aquinas opposes his teaching of the three-fold indeterminateness of the will to that of psychological determinism. The will, he says, is indeterminate with respect to its object, its act of willing, and its goal orientation. In chapter XXIV 2 of the same work, he takes the root of our freedom to be reason, which can reflect on its own act and therefore

"Freedom to act", in *Essays on Freedom of Action*, ed. by T. Honderich (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 139-156; D. Pears, "Rational Explanation of Actions and Psychological Determinism", *Ibid.*, pp. 107-36.

³⁴ Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

³⁵ Davidson, "Actions, Reasons and Causes", pp. 79f.

³⁶ Kenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 109f.

judge of its own judgment. Kenny's purpose³⁷ is to express the Thomistic doctrine of the indeterminateness of the will in the terminology of contemporary philosophy and to measure it by the standards evolved in the course of the discussion of freedom carried on by analytic philosophers. The purpose of the following account and critical survey of Kenny's interpretation is to throw light on the nature of the connection between the three-fold indeterminateness of the will and the power of reason to reflect on its own act. To do this, it will be necessary first to explain briefly the Thomistic doctrine of the former.

With respect to its *object* the will is undetermined concerning not the final end itself, which is happiness, but the means leading to this end. This indeterminateness is a consequence of the fact that the concept of the intended good is necessarily universal while the action is always a particular. Nothing particular is commensurate with a universal. Hence the inclination of the will remains indeterminate. "If an architect, for example, draws a general plan of a house, permitting several executions, his will may incline to make it round or square or to give it any other shape."³⁸ The will is indeterminate with respect to its *act* because it has the power concerning any object at all either to will it or not. In chapter VI of his treatise *On Evil*, Thomas argues that this indeterminateness concerns even happiness since we can will not to think of it.³⁹ Finally the will is indeterminate with respect to its *goal orientation* because it can intend not only what really leads to its desired end, but also what only seems to. This indeterminateness has two causes: 1) With respect to its object, the will is undetermined concerning the means to its end; 2) Our practical knowledge is capable of error so that we can err in taking as a means to a particular end what in reality is not. No one, to take Thomas' example, could desire licentiousness unless he took it to be a human good that can lead to happiness. Because the will is indeterminate with respect to its goal orientation, it is also indeterminate with respect to the desire of good and evil. This latter indeterminateness stems from the fact that human nature can fail. "For where

³⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

³⁸ *Quaestiones Disputatae*, "De malo", VI. c. p. 558.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 559-60, "...and for this reason man necessarily desires happiness. But it is my position that this necessity characterizes the specification of an act and reduces to the fact that we are unable to will the opposite. It does not attach to the exercise of an act; we can will, at a given moment, not to think of our happiness." ("...et propter hoc homo ex necessitate appetit beatitudinem...Dico autem ex necessitate quantum ad determinationem actus, quia non potest velle oppositum; non autem quantum ad exercitium actus, quia potest aliquis non velle tunc cogitare de beatitudine.")

there is no failure in the grasping and the comparing of things," says Thomas, "there can be with respect to means no will to evil, as is obviously the case with the blessed. For this reason, the will to evil, although a certain sign of the reality of freedom, is said not to be an example of freedom nor even to share in it."⁴⁰ In view of the fact that the will to evil stems from a failure of nature, the question to what extent it is imputative must be faced. But first, Kenny's interpretation must be examined.

His program is to cast the Thomistic teaching of the indeterminateness of the will in the terminology of the modern logic of practical inferences. For that reason I shall begin with an outline of the difference between a practical and a theoretical inference, in four theses, following Kenny and Hare.⁴¹

(1) A theoretical argument infers an assertoric conclusion from assertoric premises; a practical argument infers an imperative conclusion from imperative premises making use of assertoric premises.

(2) The difference between assertoric and imperative propositions, both of which describe a state of affairs, can be clarified by the assumption that the state of affairs described does not actually exist. Two situations can arise: 1) We fault the proposition on the grounds that it does not correspond to reality, or is false. In this case the proposition is assertoric. 2) We fault reality, pointing out that it does not correspond to the proposition. In this case the proposition is an imperative. This characterization makes it clear that the concept of an imperative in the present context is wider than that of ordinary language. Not only imperatives in the commonly used sense of commands, but also sentences expressing wishes, intentions, requests, norms, requirements and so on, are to be treated as imperative propositions. In the technical language, an imperative is called a "fiat"; the artificial expression calls attention to this distinction.

(3) Inferences are made on the basis of logical rules. In the case of theoretical inferences, the function of the rules is to prevent the drawing of a false conclusion from true premises, that is, to preserve truth. The corresponding value, which the rules of practical inference are to preserve, is satisfactoriness. The rules of the practical syllogism are to insure that the conclusion satisfies the wishes, commands or whatever is expressed by the premises.

(4) The logical rules of both practical and theoretical inference are

⁴⁰ *Quaestiones Disputatae*, "De veritate", XXII. 6. c. vol. I, p. 399.

⁴¹ For the following refer to Kenny, op. cit., chap. 5; R. M. Hare, "Practical Inferences", in *Practical Inferences*, ed. by Hare (London, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 59-73.

the same. And while there are no inferences between "fiats" which do not have their correlate in assertoric logic, the logic of necessary and sufficient conditions is, for practical inference, of primary importance.

The significance of these theses for the notion of freedom must be discussed; as a preliminary, two illustrations provided by Aristotle,⁴² whose doctrine of the practical syllogism has become the basis of the modern discussion, may serve to clarify them.

(1) All men should walk. I am a man. Therefore I should walk.

In this syllogism a *necessary* condition is inferred. The state of affairs demanded by the major premise, that all men walk, can be satisfied only if I walk. But the condition mentioned in the conclusion is not sufficient for the satisfaction of the major premise; my walking does not imply that all men walk.

(2) I need a cover. A coat is a cover. Therefore I need a coat.

In this syllogism a *sufficient* condition is inferred. The state of affairs demanded in the major premise, that I have a cover, is satisfied if the fiat of the conclusion is satisfied, that is, if I have a coat. Hence the condition expressed by the conclusion is a sufficient one. But it is not a necessary one because the state of affairs demanded by the major premise can be otherwise satisfied. A coat is not the only possible cover; a jacket or a blanket could serve the same purpose.

According to Thomas and Kenny the argument form permitting the inference of a sufficient condition is fundamental to practical deliberation. The reason, in the case of Thomas, is that his ethics is one of the good or the end. The highest premise of practical deliberation according to Thomas is an assertion concerning the final and necessary goal of human striving that may be reached in different ways.⁴³ Kenny too, as will be shown, takes practical deliberation to follow from goals. The question, which of the two argument forms is of primary importance for practical deliberation, amounts to the controversy between teleological and deontological ethics, a topic that cannot, within the limits of the present context, be profitably discussed.

These logical considerations are significant for the problem of freedom because they show that the judgment resulting from practical

⁴² *De motu animalium*, 7. 701a7-20. English trans. by E. S. Forster, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 461.

⁴³ *Quaest. Disp.*, "De veritate", XXII. 6. c. p. 399: "Many ways can lead to the same end, different ones for different travellers." ("...ad finem multis viis perveniri potest, et diversis diversae viae competunt perveniendi in ipsum.")

deliberation (the conclusion of the practical syllogism) does not compel us to act. The logical reason for this is that practical deliberation permits the inference of a sufficient, but not of a necessary condition. Freedom, according to Thomas, rests on the power of reason to form a judgment of its own judgment. It can grasp the premises and the logical laws on which the practical conclusion rests and therefore recognize that it is contingent, that is, that the condition it mentions for the fulfillment of the goal in question is not necessary, but only sufficient.

Thomas and Kenny trace the contingency of the practical conclusion to different causes. The decisive fact, in Thomas' view, is that none of the particular objects of the will has a necessary connection to the final, necessary and all-embracing end of the will, which is happiness. Kenny rejects the Aristotelian and Thomistic teaching that happiness is the ultimate, objective and comprehensive end of the will.⁴⁴ In his view practical deliberation does not start with an all-embracing end, but with a particular one, desired for its own sake. Such an end in what follows will be called a purpose; the fiat that expresses a purpose will be called a goal fiat. The major premise of a practical syllogism is a goal fiat for the fulfillment of which the conclusion indicates a sufficient condition. Being only sufficient, this condition leaves play for freedom. But this is not the decisive point of Kenny's theory. He attributes greater significance to the fact that every practical syllogism inferring a sufficient condition can be invalidated by the introduction of new goal fiats as premises, that is, by the fact that every practical syllogism inferring a sufficient condition can be invalidated by the extension of the deliberation to further purposes.⁴⁵ This can be illustrated by Aristotle's example. The goal fiat, "I need a cover" is fulfilled by the inference "Spend \$3,000 on a coat". If the only premise is my need for a warm piece of clothing, this inference is valid. But it can be invalidated by the consideration that such a possession is not my only purpose. If it is also important not to overburden my finances by the purchase of a coat, the inference is invalid. In this case the practical deliberation must start from different premises, seeking a conclusion that fulfills both purposes. Hence the notion of satisfactoriness is just as relative as that of means. A practical conclusion is satisfactory only with respect to given goal fiats; the introduction of further goal fiats renders its satisfactoriness uncertain. It is Kenny's view that the totality of goal fiats pertinent to a practical deliberation can never be

⁴⁴ Kenny, op. cit., pp. 93-96; also "Aristotle on Happiness", in *The Anatomy of the Soul*, ed. by Kenny (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), pp. 51-61.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 91-93.

completely ascertained.⁴⁶ For this reason no practical conclusion can necessitate a particular action; any given inference can be rendered invalid by the addition of new goal considerations to the premises of the argument. Thomas views the contingency of all particular objects of the will as a consequence of the one all-embracing objective end which is happiness; in Kenny's view, this contingency is a consequence of the fact that the set of purposes can never be ascertained in its totality. On this basis the Thomistic thesis that reason, in having the power to judge its own judgment, is the source of freedom, can be formulated as follows: Reason knows that it is in a position to exhibit the invalidity of a practical inference by introducing new goal fiats.

What does Kenny's analysis of practical deliberation accomplish? What question does it leave open? It shows that reasons cannot be understood as causes in Hume's sense of the word. The same reason does not, in general, lead to the same type of action as Hume's concept of causality requires. But apart from the fact that a reason permits different actions as conditions sufficient for its satisfaction, no purpose can determine the agent to a particular action primarily because, by taking any number of other purposes into consideration, he can always modify the practical conclusion.⁴⁷ If it is assumed that the agent alone determines which of the conditions sufficient for a goal fiat he selects and which goal fiats he introduces, it can be said provisionally that Kenny's theory of practical deliberation is compatible with the interpretation of the assertion of imputability that views it as a statement of the possibility of a different decision.

On this view, however, imputation cannot be understood in a moral sense. Kenny himself points out that he has formalized only a part of the logic of practical inference. Among other things, he says, it provides no criteria by which the considerations for and against an action can be weighed.⁴⁸ So far, in other words, Kenny's theory, in the form in which he has presented it, leaves no room for the concept of the unconditional practical justification, hence for the concepts of morally good and bad. It cites no criteria for deciding which purposes are to be given preference. This shortcoming results from Kenny's rejection of the Aristotelian-Thomistic concept of a final,

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 94: "The notion of a premiss which is complete enough to prevent defeasibility while specific enough to entail a practical conclusion is surely chimerical." This is the central point of Kenny's criticism of Aristotle and Thomas.

⁴⁷ Kenny shows (ibid., p. 117) that taking further goal fiats into consideration cannot be explained as interference. The introduction of new goal fiats does not prevent the satisfaction of the others. In contrast, an interfering cause prevents the other causes from achieving their (full) effect.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 95.

objective and comprehensive end. What are the consequences for the notion of freedom? Freedom, in his view, consists in non-determination by practical deliberation, i.e., in the fact that the agent himself determines which purposes he takes into consideration. This concept of freedom may be adequate to explain the fact of extra-moral imputation; but it is inadequate if freedom is understood as self-determination of the will and the will as a purely rational striving. As a result, Kenny's theory is not in a position to develop the concept of freedom as the power to decide for or against rational action as such, which is the only notion of freedom capable of explaining moral imputation. To understand freedom on the basis of Kenny's theory of practical inference, as something purely negative — non-determination by reason — is to confer validity on Nowell-Smith's objection, that a free act in this sense cannot be differentiated from a chance occurrence. Self-determination, on Kenny's view, would consist in the fact that having renounced the power to determine itself as a rational faculty, the will allows itself to be determined by those empirical purposes which, for no reason at all, it selects for consideration.

In conclusion, I propose a rough outline of the direction in which Kenny's thoughts could be further developed along the lines of Thomas. Freedom as self-determination of the will, which is a rational striving, cannot be understood unless there is a supreme *a priori* premise which provides criteria permitting an evaluation of empirical purposes. The present context does not require a decision as to whether this premise must be conceived along the lines of the Aristotelian-Thomistic quest for happiness or of the Kantian law of reason. Only a premise of this nature makes it possible to conceive freedom as the power to decide for or against a rational action, that is, freedom with regard to the morally good and evil. How then is the possibility of actions carried out in opposition to reason to be explained? Thomas cites the indeterminateness of the will with respect to its goal orientation, which derives from the fallibility of human nature in its fallen state: We expect things to bring happiness, which in reality cannot. The question was raised how the imputability of a bad action can be explained on this view. To this, the question of the imputability of a rational action may be added: Does the will have the power to decide against practical reason? Only if it does is a rational action imputable. The logic of the sufficient condition provides of itself no answer to this question since it exhibits only the indeterminateness of the will with respect to rational actions, or more precisely, to actions the agent views as (conditionally) rational. The answer to both of these questions seems to be contained in Thomas' doctrine of the indeterminateness of the will with respect to the act. This, at least, may be stated only in the form of a thesis re-

quiring manifold distinctions. To explain the imputability of a bad action, Thomas invokes the power of reason to reflect on its own judgment. To act on the basis of a false practical conclusion is to have disregarded the possibility of this reflection. If it is asked why it was disregarded, it must be answered — provided a bad action is to be imputed — that the agent disregarded it because he wanted to; if he inquires into the correctness of his practical judgment, he does so because he wants to. The same is true with respect to the imputability of a reasonable action. The agent recognized what was right because he wanted to; apart from the will the knowledge could not have been attained. In both cases therefore, imputability presupposes the possibility of not willing to know what is right. This possibility can be accounted for only in terms of the Thomistic notion of the indeterminateness of the will with respect to its act. The decision not to ask what is right cannot be reduced to a choice between two objects for the preference of either of which good reasons can be adduced. The absence of the will to ask what is right cannot be explained in terms of a rational ground for not inquiring after what is right, but only in terms of the fact that the question is not willed — that the will, apart from rational grounds, disallows the question. This is evidenced by the fact that it would be meaningless to ask “For what reason do I not will to ask what is right?” To ask this would make sense only as an expression of the will to ask what is right. In the absence of such a will, the question could not be posed. No one can seek reasonable grounds for seeking none. Freedom, therefore, in the sense of imputability stems ultimately from the fact that the will of man can, without any reasonable grounds, want not to ask for practical justification.

THOMAS AQUINAS: ON WHAT MAKES AN ACTION GOOD*

Wolfgang Kluxen

Translated by David Mallon

1

Recent interest in a philosophic treatment of the theme "action" has arisen as part of that process called the "rehabilitation of practical philosophy". If this process may be conceived as a reaction against an earlier widely prevailing hermeneutic thinking, one understands that it has energetically turned to the problem of the *norm* and has therein found its center. According to the judgment of competent observers, the fundamental theme "action" has come less to the fore.¹ But one may say that decisive impulses have been received from three different directions which have determined the field of discussion.

First, there is the reference to Aristotle and his concept of "praxis", in contrast to "theory" on the one side and to "poiesis" (production) on the other. Upon this concept of praxis, in turn, the concept of practical philosophy has been established. Here the name of Joachim Ritter must be mentioned, but also that of Hannah Arendt, whose *The Human Condition* (despite certain reservations) also makes it clear that this reference is by no means a matter of mere historical reminiscence.²

Second, we should recall the sociological concept of action that, since Max Weber, has remained fundamental through a number of

* Translated from Wolfgang Kluxen, "Thomas von Aquin: Zum Gutsein des Handelns", in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 87 (1980): 327-39.

¹ For example, Rudiger Bubner, *Handlung, Sprache und Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976), pp. 7, 11f.

² Joachim Ritter, collected articles first begun in 1953, in *Metaphysik und Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969). Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). This work appeared in German in 1960 as *Vita Activa*.

transformations and represents a challenge for philosophical criticism.³ The theory-praxis discussion, which has subsided in the meantime, was begun here, and not just by Marxism. The Marxist understanding of praxis, however, is suited more to mistake the general problem of action than to explain it.

Third, the analytic theory of action is becoming increasingly significant. Its language approach, to be sure, appears too narrow and, at times in the discussion, has lost itself in subtleties. In these cases, the method has been exclusively applied to resolve difficulties that have arisen from its application; ascriptivism, for instance, is such a solution.⁴ But this approach leads to a new treatment, in an altered style, of significant fundamental problems of the tradition, for example, of the problem of the will and its freedom or the problem of "action" in general. The controversy between the representatives of the "intentional" explanation of action should be mentioned here, which can indeed be understood as the repetition of very old battles.⁵

This may provide further support for the thesis that old philosophical problems of a fundamental character are not settled by solutions, that great controversies are not decided by victory, and that fruitful doctrines are not uniformly, and probably only seldom, made to disappear by refutation. At the very least one can learn from the tradition. It is noteworthy that the analytic concept of "intention" is clearly traceable to Thomas Aquinas: both Elizabeth Anscombe and especially Anthony Kenny refer to him.⁶ Of course they do this without any historical intention and in a way that does not always take the historical context into consideration. I am surely not always in agreement with Kenny's reading of Thomas, and consequently with his criticism, but that does not lessen my respect for the intelligence of this appropriation.

Yet it is striking, precisely in view of this unexpected example, that, for the most part, Thomas Aquinas has played no noticeable role in the "rehabilitation of practical philosophy" and particularly

³ In regard to this, compare, for example, Rudiger Bubner, *Handlung, Sprache, und Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), pp. 9-60.

⁴ This is made clear by Peter Geach, "Ascriptivism", *Philosophical Review* 69 (1960), pp. 221-25.

⁵ In regard to this see *Analytische Handlungstheorie*, Volume I, *Handlungsbeschreibungen*, ed. by G. Meggle (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), and Volume II, *Handlungserklärungen*, ed. by A. Beckermann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), with introductions and bibliography.

⁶ G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957). A. J. P. Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and Will* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), and A. J. P. Kenny, *Will, Freedom, and Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), hereafter referred to as WFP.

in the discussion concerning the concept of action. What is more, it was he who by means of his reception of Aristotle's ethics was the first medieval thinker systematically to formulate a "practical" science in a genuine sense and to give within it a discriminating analysis of action. The effective-historical significance of both of these accomplishments extends into our century. This holds true up until today not only for moral theology, which Thomas really founded as a scientific-theological discipline, but also in the realm of philosophy. Consider Thomas' role in the discussion of natural law, or the mighty and wide-ranging consequences of Josef Pieper's transmission of Thomas' doctrine of virtue. It must be acknowledged, however, that even the current moral theology, which to a large degree critically confronts the ethical reflections of contemporaries and makes an effort to integrate them, has meanwhile put Thomas into the background, even in the "fundamental moral science" (*"Fundamentalmoral"*).

It seems to me that this is essentially due to the fact that since the integration of the relevant philosophical knowledge belongs to the structural principle of his theological "synthesis", Thomas' ethics emerges within this synthesis in close connection with a metaphysics that also brings action under its point of view. Consequently, his metaphysics appears to have priority over ethics in the sense that it has been understood for the most part, within Thomism, as being the foundation of ethics — as though ethics were derivable from metaphysical positions. Certainly it can now be shown (and this may today be acknowledged by the interpreters of Thomas) that the metaphysics of action must be philosophically understood as a reflection on the knowledge of an independent practical science and, inasmuch as this is the case, it cannot be charged with the "naturalistic fallacy".⁷ Nevertheless, the fact remains that precisely this correlation of metaphysics and ethics is a stylistic feature of Thomas' synthesis. Indeed, one can even regard the development of the metaphysics of action (with its preservation of the independence of practical science) as a decisive accomplishment of Thomas.⁸ Therefore, one can expect a deepening interest in Thomas precisely where there is an interest in metaphysics and, where metaphysics is shunted aside or even despised, one cannot anticipate an interest in involvement with him. Of course, by its very nature, the problematic pur-

⁷ The conception of the historical position and structural arrangement of ethics on which this analysis is based was first published in 1964 in my investigation *Philosophische Ethik bei Thomas von Aquin* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980²), hereafter PETA.

⁸ L. Oeing-Hanhoff states this correctly in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. by Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co. AG Verlag, 1980), pp. 1217-26 under "Metaphysik".

sued to the greatest lengths by Thomas — in general, that of theoretical and practical reason — would have to meet with almost exemplary interest. But, in view of the incorporation of the thought into theology, it is thus not possible merely by referring to texts to bring it immediately into actual recognition within the systematization that he has provided. An interpretative preparation is required that always simultaneously reflects upon the context and thereby separates itself from it.

It is my intention here to present several of Thomas' positions on the theory of action. In doing this I will act as an interpreter, separating them from their context and relating them to contemporary themes. My intention will be to clarify the model of Thomas as a possible corrective for the discussion.

2

The concept used by Thomas that encompasses the meaning of "action" is that of the *actus humanus* (act of man). Only such activity can be called "human" in a genuine sense which is characteristic of the human qua human. What distinguishes him from all other beings, then, is that he is the master of his deeds. He has the "power of free decision" (*liberum arbitrium*), and thereby power over his deeds (*suorum operum potestatem*). But he has this power through reason and will, and consequently only those acts earn the title "human" that proceed from deliberate will (*ex deliberata voluntate procedunt*).⁹

Actions — provisionally speaking and in a way that still needs to be justified — are accordingly to be distinguished from all events, called *actus hominis* (acts of man), that occur to and within humans but do not come from deliberate will, for example, the falling of a human body according to the law of gravity, a heartbeat, or a sexual excitation, which are not under the control of reason and are not evoked by the will.¹⁰ Also something like a purely reflexive gesture, such as stroking a beard, would be another example.

A deed that does not receive its original impulse from reason and will, but rather begins on a level that we share with animals, nevertheless does not fall outside the realm of action. Hunger and

⁹ *Summa de theologia*, I-II. 1. 1, as well as the prologue.

¹⁰ To be sure, a heartbeat and a sexual excitation can be mediately influenced by ideas that in turn arouse *passiones* (passions), but they do not obey the command of reason, since reason cannot evoke the *alteratio* (alteration) necessary for these motions. Heartbeat and sex are principles of life that, as such, have their own "natural" motion, and both are, so to speak, "animals for themselves" (*animal separatum*). With regard to this see Thomas I-II. 17. 9 *ad* 3 in reference to Aristotle's *De motu animalium*, 703b6-26.

thirst, spontaneous attraction or repulsion, and the whole realm of the passions of the soul (*passiones animae*), namely of emotional or affective life, can be controlled to some degree. To the extent that this is the case, the events proceeding from such a drive are "actions".¹¹

To such an extent action should also be called "voluntary" (*voluntarium*). Thomas adopts Aristotle's concept τὸ ἐκούσιον, which primarily characterizes that spontaneity, also pertaining to animals, with which a recognized end is sought. Thomas makes this precise: complete free will is composed not just of the knowledge of an end, but also of the knowledge of the idea of the end (*ratio finis*) as well as of the relation of the act to the end (*proportio actus ad finem*) — or also of the relation of that-which-is-ordered-to-an-end to that end (*proportio eius quod ordinatur in finem ad ipsum*) — thus distinguishing action from "behavior".¹² Kenny expressed this reference to the *ratio finis*, in the terms of analytic theory, as the requirement that the agent be able to provide in language the reason for his action.¹³ This seems acceptable to me as long as the ability to do so is not pressed.

In any case, it is already apparent here how the theory of action is related to a conception of freedom that establishes freedom in the interaction between reason and will.¹⁴ The will is the capacity for striving and, as such, is defined by the fact that its object is an "end". The capacity for striving as such does not know, however, but rather is dependent upon ends being presented to it by a capacity for knowledge. The will is that capacity for striving that is correlated to reason and, to this extent, the domain of that which can be its object is no smaller than the domain of those objects that reason can discover. But since reason is open to "being", at least in an abstract way, the will becomes a universal capacity for ends. This can also be expressed as follows: will is related to the "good" in general, just as reason is related to being in general. For the determination "end" contains the idea of the good (*ratio boni*) — the good is what every-

¹¹ Thomas speaks of a "political" primacy of reason in contrast to a "despotic" one: I. 81. 3 *ad* 2; also compare I-II. 17. 7; I-II. 24. 1, and a number of other passages.

¹² I-II. 6. 2.

¹³ WFP, pp. 20f.

¹⁴ I will not give detailed confirmations. They may be completely adduced for the statements of this paragraph and those of the following one from *De malo* 6. K. Riesenhuber gives an elaboration of the extensive textual materials in *Die Transzendenz der Freiheit zum Guten. Der Wille in der Anthropologie und Metaphysik des Thomas von Aquin* (München: Berchmanskolleg, 1971). Also compare A. Zimmermann, "Der Begriff der Freiheit nach Thomas von Aquin", in *Thomas von Aquin 1274-1974*, ed. by L. Oeting-Hanhoff (München: Kösel Verlag, 1974), pp. 125-60.

thing desires (*bonum est quod omnia appetunt*) — that is shown by the relation to a striving.¹⁵ Because this is so, the will cannot be *necessitated* to act by a particular good; it must *intend* its respective ends. For in earthly life it is impossible that an end be presented to it that, as a universal good, would completely satisfy it and consequently *necessitate* it such that the will could not avoid willing it. To this extent the will is always free to will or also not to will (*libertas exercitii*, freedom of exercise), just as it is also free to will this or that, to the degree that reason places before it various objects as possible (*libertas specificationis*, freedom of specification).

The will, as a capacity for the “good” in general, possesses freedom and, moreover, in having such a capacity, is always already “in motion” through God, the founder of nature. Thus it has the capacity of spontaneous self-motion for every particular determination of an end. The will does not possess this freedom from itself, as a capacity for striving; rather it possesses it because the will belongs to that nature which, as rationally determined by the universal, by being in general, is capable of knowing. Thus reason is the cause, *causa*, of freedom. Nevertheless, the abstractly universal reason concretely is finite, and, in a number of efforts, must represent being by means of a number of truths. In this process, as judging, it falls under the contrariety of true and false. The will, therefore, because it is completely dependent upon reason, falls under the contrariety of the true and the “apparent” good, and perhaps also under the impression of that particular and ephemeral good that reveals itself as a mere instinctual end, but does so effectively, as opposed to the rational end. The will moves toward action, as it were, “alongside of” or even “against” reason: it falls under the difference between “good” and “bad” or “evil”. This kind of freedom (*libertas contrarietatis*, freedom of contrariety) should be ontologically viewed as a deficiency. But the prominent difference in it between good and evil as the condition of willing is that point at which the reason of a being capable of action can no longer remain in the serene detachment of theoretical knowledge.

Reason in itself is not practical, but as the reason of a being that strives and is capable of action it is practical. It is a reason that intellectually represents the realm of action for such a being.¹⁶ Insofar as

¹⁵ Conversely, it is also true that the good has the idea of the end (*bonum habet rationem finis*). Although the ideas (*rationes*) are not the same, still they both belong to that which is concretely *bonum* (good) and *finis* (end), and Thomas can refer to each as a justification in the same text; compare I-II. 94. 2.

¹⁶ With regard to the following compare PETA, chap. 3.

it judges actions that one can do or not do, it can also say whether they are "to be done" or "not to be done", that is, it judges "practically". Accordingly, it follows from the idea of the good (*ratio boni*) determined by the concept of striving that good is "what is to be done" and evil is "what is not to be done". The question "Why be moral?" is easily answered: because it is good (whoever does not realize this, then, must go to hell through his own responsibility; of course he can also will this). Accordingly, if it is essential for the action to be "voluntary" and to be subject to the difference between good and bad, then the knowledge appropriate to it cannot be provided by a theoretical analysis, but only by a practical science, which contains, among other things, prescriptive propositions, norms, and values, and which completes itself precisely in them.

Conversely, this means that even theoretically initiated analyses of action must essentially have the result of leading to a practical knowledge of "what is good", to the extent that this can be accomplished by the will.¹⁷ Therefore, two kinds of human activities are excluded, although, according to their literal meaning, they would surely be classified as acts of man (*actus humani*). First there is theoretical science, namely, insofar as it is a result of insight and not of will. As an activity that one can will or not will, however, it remains the object of a practical consideration. This is particularly true for the theoretical, contemplative form of life or for the question whether or not one ought to pursue science in a particular situation of pressing need. However, this has nothing to do with the essence of theoretical science as knowledge.

Further, and this is more significant, the realm of "production", which Thomas distinguishes as making (*facere*) as opposed to acting (*agere*), is excluded. What is involved here is a product that has existence in itself, existing outside of the material world independent of its producer. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, Thomas often chooses medicine as an example, the product of which is healing; one can also view a theater performance as such a product. In any case, what is important is that the product becomes "good", namely, is properly performed; the standard for the truth of the knowledge lies in the product. Here one should not speak of "practical" knowledge, but rather of technical knowledge, of *ars* (art) or, more precisely, of the knowledge of an art, which does not itself say *whether* the product is to be "made" but only *how*.

¹⁷ With regard to this, compare PETA, pp. 46f. This conception is significant for the "technical" sciences as well as for medicine and jurisprudence inasmuch as they refute the idea that knowledge originating as purely theoretical is then "applied." The current theory of science, and especially the predominant conception of the scientist, have to be decisively corrected here. What is involved is the determination of the science's end, not that of the individual scientist.

Once again it is true that the act of production, as a voluntary act, still must fall under the measure of a "knowledge of action". It can surely happen that a "good" act of production, thus a technically perfect one, should nevertheless be judged otherwise as an "action". Yet (not seldom) there are special cases in which technical ability can be significant for the question concerning the practical good. Obvious examples of this may be found, above all those taken from the realm of "professional ethics". The fundamental distinction, however, should be clearly and strictly maintained.

The real basis for this distinction can be expressed in another way. One becomes a good scientist to the degree that he learns science. The producer of a product will possess the "art" and be distinguished thereby. But if the will is good, the whole person is good, for indeed the will is the universal capacity for ends and, as such, brings about "everything" in the person. Within every striving the will is the "first mover" precisely because of its universality. Everything that is actualized in a person must be referred to it, not according to the species determination, to be sure, but indeed as a human actualization. Viewing action as human (thus as action) consequently means viewing it ultimately from the vantage point of the good that is to be accomplished.

3

The preceding presentation served primarily to provide certain qualifications regarding the concept of action. Also, the reference to the metaphysical doctrine of freedom led to the position of practical reason and its appropriate science as being that science to which the doctrine of action belongs. It is noteworthy that Thomas begins his doctrine of action with a train of thought that at first appears to have a completely metaphysical character: the doctrine of the ultimate end.¹⁸

It is well-known that, in general, Thomas conceives all striving and operation to be determined by ends, indeed, already insofar as they are uniform and at all determined.¹⁹ As determined by ends, how-

¹⁸ See *Summa de theologia*, I-II. It presents itself (compare the prologue, intro., and q. 1. 1-3) actually as the doctrine of human actions and begins, *as such*, with the doctrine of the ultimate end.

¹⁹ The decisive justification is formulated by I-II. 1. 2, among other passages: "*Si enim agens non esset determinatum ad aliquem effectum, non magis ageret hoc quam illud: ad hoc ergo quod determinatum effectum producat, necesse est quod determinetur ad aliquid certum quod habet rationem finis.*" ("For if an agent were not determined to some effect, he would no more do this than that. In order that he produce a determinate effect, it is necessary that he be determined to something certain that has the idea of the end.") For a similar passage see, for example, *Summa contra Gentiles* (ScG) III. 2.

ever, nature is ordered, not chaotic; to this extent, its finality is totally determined by a unitary final end, namely, God.²⁰ But this reasoning is not simply carried over to the realm of human operation except in a formal sense. In human willing there are ends that are willed, and so it must be asked whether there always is something ultimately willed. This question means the same as the question whether there is something willed first, since the end only comes last in the performance; in the "intention" it comes at the beginning.²¹

Is something willed first or ultimately in human life? The answer must indeed be "yes", since otherwise we would have a *processus in infinitum* (infinite regress). Nothing further could be willed, and no deed would come to an end since it could not even begin. Of course the presupposition of this proof is that an inherent order (*ordo per se*) is involved here, and thus that the person, identical with himself, leads a life that he completes as one person's life. That only a single final end is involved here Thomas proves in three ways. First, every being strives for its perfection, thus for a good that satisfies the extent of its striving, bringing it to rest and leaving it nothing more to strive for. Accordingly, one cannot strive for any other good in addition to this primary satisfying good. Secondly, he refers to the fact that the will as a "nature", that is, as a certain determinate capacity, is first of all "one". As will, this is only possible in that it by nature wills one thing. This one end willed both ultimately and first defines it as the capacity for ends. Third, a unitary principle for the total realm of action is necessary in order to be able to conceive it as a unified "species". But since an action is what it is (and thus contains its "species") through the end that belongs to it,²² a single, common ultimate end must be established as a first principle for the species "action". This should be true not only abstractly, for instance, for man in general or for the species of man; it is true for every person that all his willing is established through the determination of a single ultimate end.

This train of thought strikes one as being all too formal, and it will be difficult for many people today to find it convincing. It is also clear that it is designed within the background of a metaphysical

²⁰ Thomas sees the universal finality of God in connection with the doctrine of participation. To the extent that a creature actualizes itself in its acts, it participates in a "similarity to God" (for example, I. 44. 4c and *ad* 3; I. 65. 2; I. 103. 2, among other passages). Even in the case of a nature that does not possess knowledge or a non-rational nature, it is a matter of its own constitution, so that God's finality is not merely "external".

²¹ I-II. 1. 4. In the following discussion I am referring to the thought found in this and the following article (article 5). With regard to this, compare PETA, pp. 115-18.

²² This is treated in the preceding article, I-II. 1. 3.

finalism, from which perspective it is of course less problematic, even if this train of thought does not simply "translate" the perspective of finalism. But for Thomas it is not at all yet a matter of content only introduced later (happiness and that in which it ultimately consists, God); rather, it is really a formal factor, something always already and continually willed first.

Perhaps the meaning of the text can be explained in the following way. It is simply a fact that every action occurs within a life context, from which it arises and to which it reacts. Whoever acts changes himself; he determines himself as the doer of this deed, and he also does this when he abstains from acting. He shapes his life, he "leads" it, and he does this in every single deed. The will leading to this particular deed is not exhausted by it. In this deed and through a succession of such deeds, he simultaneously wills to lead a life extending beyond these deeds. One can ask about the "meaning" of this deed, not only with respect to itself, but also within the context of life, and then one can also ask about the "meaning" of this context of life itself. Not only the single action, but also the context of the action, can be shaped as "meaningful" by deliberate willing. The action can show itself to be a part of a *life plan* according to which an overarching *meaning of life* orders, or even establishes, the meaning of the action.

Thus one can ask whether human action can be adequately understood as action if it is not simultaneously conceived as the realization, or even lack of realization, of a meaning of life. The meaning of life would then be what is willed first, and always presupposed in every particular willing. The further question concerning whether the meaning of life is consciously willed is not necessarily involved here, since it would be presupposed in each particular conscious willing, and would be, so to speak, something posited along with it — something about which one does not have to think. (Someone going to a distant destination does not always think about this destination, even though it guides his every step.) Accordingly, one should also not speak of a *life plan* in the same sense as career planning. In life the end result does not have to be determined once and for all, and in the course of life what is willed first does not always have to be the same. Even the final end can change; it is in each case the effective first-willed thing, and every person is at every moment in a position to give his whole life another meaning. What Max Scheler has said about "repentance and rebirth" is appropriate in this context. Therefore, the question should also be raised concerning a "true" ultimate end or, if this is seen as "happiness", concerning the true content of happiness.

All this shows that the doctrine of the "ultimate end" does not

have a purely speculative, metaphysical significance, no matter how well it may fit in with Thomas' metaphysics and follow its procedure. What is involved is not a structure merely to be ascertained, but one to be completed in action; and that which is necessarily willed is at first an abstract presupposition the content of which still needs to be achieved. We do not act within the genus of nature (*genus naturae*) but rather within the genus of morality (*genus moris*), in other words, in the practical order of reason (*ordo rationis*). For to speak of will, one must first speak of reason. The will's ends are not present as theoretically determinable facts; they are first conceived as "objects" by reason, so that an act of willing can be directed toward their actualization. Therefore, actions are also not actions in that they are occurrences in the world; rather, they are actions in that they have significance in the order of reason. According to Thomas' example, the occurrence of homicide is totally different when it is revenge than when it is legitimate punishment. The same natural event can have opposite specifications in the order of reason — as an act of hate it can be evil or as an act of justice it can be good.²³ Further, Thomas' discussion about object and end cannot then be understood as if it involved independent factors, external to action. They are principles of the act that, as such, belong to it inasmuch as they determine it and inasmuch as it is what it is through them.²⁴ Hence even the "ultimate end" is nothing externally present but rather, as something willed, it is that principle belonging to every action, through which it first of all is "action", that is, through which it belongs to the genus of action and is ordered toward a meaning of life.

4

Aristotle (at least the Aristotle of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) and Thomas have been criticized by Kenny because they make the good of an action dependent upon a "life plan" in which it is involved.²⁵ I can appreciate this criticism when it is applied to a position that devalues all particular ends, reducing them to mere means that bring about the good only in the ultimate end. Kenny himself limits this

²³ I-II. 1. 3 *ad* 3.

²⁴ I-II. 1. 3. *ad* 1.

²⁵ A. J. P. Kenny, "Aristotle on Happiness", in *The Anatomy of the Soul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), chap. 3. Compare A. J. P. Kenny, "Thomas von Aquin über den Willen", in *Thomas von Aquin im philosophischen Gespräch* ed. by W. Kluxen, (Freiburg: Alber Verlag, 1975), pp. 123f (n.).

criticism in regard to Thomas, since Thomas truly acknowledges that there are ends even in the particulars, that is, in the finite limited good. Indeed, Thomas even lets ends be valid where, in a sequence of actions, several mutually dependent ends are sought, thus where, without doubt, "mediation" occurs. I believe that Kenny's criticism is not tenable in the light of the interpretation that has been given of the doctrine of the ultimate end. However, I can agree with Kenny when he sees the decisive step of Thomas in the introduction of the concept of *intentio* (intention).²⁶ It characterizes that act in which the will grasps or directs itself toward prior recognized ends as such. Intention relegates *προαίρεσις* (choice; in Thomas, *electio*), which is central for Aristotle, to a subordinate position — according to Kenny, a significant advance in the analysis of action. Even someone who is not a follower of the "intentional" doctrine of action of the analytic philosophers can acknowledge this.

Intentio is that concept by means of which the particular, concrete, and real action is conceived as something independent, that is, not dependent upon the ultimate end. Thomas introduces it, as well as the concept of *electio* (choice), within the context of an analysis of action (here one can speak of such an analysis) in which, according to the approach that he sustains, the leading question is that of the interaction between will and understanding.²⁷ Accordingly, the *intentio* follows a knowledge of the end conceived by the understanding and, in turn, it is followed by a *consilium* (consultation) in the understanding concerning the means to the end. The will must then again agree (*consensus*) with this *consilium*, so that the understanding can come to a concluding judgment about what is to be done (*judicium ultimum practicum*). After this follows the choice (*electio*) of the will, through the power of which the understanding then gives the command (*imperium*; Thomas also says *praecipere*, to order²⁸). Next follows the *usus* (exercise), the actual execution of the action.

I do not believe that with these concepts Thomas wants to des-

²⁶ WFP, p. 21.

²⁷ More precisely, the analysis of action of I-II begins with the treatment of the *voluntarium* (the voluntary, q. 6) and the *circumstantiae* (circumstances, q. 7). Next it investigates the "will" itself (qq. 8-10) and the *fruitio* that is the "enjoyment" of the ultimate end (q. 11), and only then the *intentio* (intentions, q. 12), by means of which the determinate, concrete-particular establishment of the end occurs. After this, the series of *electio*, *consilium*, *consensus*, and *usus* (choice, consultation, agreement, and exercise are considered (qq. 13-16) as the acts that presuppose the establishment of the end and that now are involved with *ea quae sunt ad finem* (those things that are directed to the end). I do not here go into the question regarding the difference between the *actus elicitus* (elicited act) and the *actus imperatus* (commanded act).

²⁸ This is also true in the analysis of prudence, II-II. 47. 8, the proper act of which is called *praecipere* (ordering). Thomas is not rigid in his terminology, but nevertheless exact.

cribe real psychological events, that is, a succession of occurrences (although some of these concepts can be names of occurrences). Instead, they might portray a kind of "logic of action", which perhaps can be reconstructed by means of the analytic theories of action or translated into their style. This possibly attractive, in any case lengthy and difficult, task I do not want to undertake. I also do not want systematically to go into Thomas' expositions of the good and evil of action (the particular actions), ascertained according to object, end, and circumstances (I have treated this elsewhere.)²⁹ What is more important is the indication that, regardless of how things stand concerning the ultimate end and the encompassing meaning of life, Thomas sees in the particular, distinct, concrete realm an abundance of immediate evidence of the good, making a particular action "good" if it establishes such an end for itself.

It is certainly clear that it is good to satisfy hunger and thirst, one's own or that of another; this is a pressing instinctual end that reason cannot circumvent. It is clear that it is good to reciprocate entrusted good and to tell the truth, although there can be circumstances that place this good in doubt; but these are clearly special circumstances. It is clear that one has done a good deed who, at the risk of his life, has saved a child from a river, even if no categorical imperative compelled him to do so. It is not the duty but the inclination that primarily reveals the good to us, and the inclinations are primarily "natural" drives moving us to live up to our "potential". There is no need to think only of "lower drives". Also our desire to know, our respect for the higher, and our longing for "meaning" are natural inclinations that bring to mind higher values and can move us to commensurate actions.³⁰

The will does not realize the good from abstract freedom and empty caprice indifferent to any content. It realizes the good as a capacity belonging to the complexly organized nature, dynamically actualizing itself in many ways from its inclination, striving, and "being". In this concretization, this nature stands in an immediate relation to the abundance of corresponding concrete, particular goods. Admittedly, it is true that a particular instinctual end is first of all "good" for the particular instinct, namely, as its satisfaction. If it is to be "willed" as good, however, the satisfaction of the instinct must simultaneously serve the whole person, that is, it must be "rationally" ordered. To this extent, a particular instinctual

²⁹ Compare PETA, chapters 10 and 11.

³⁰ The classical enumeration of the *inclinationes naturales* (natural inclinations) is found in I-II. 94. 2. Also compare ScG III. 63, where (in the terms preferred there) the ordered multiplicity of the *desideria* (desires) belonging to human nature are presented.

end is only humanly good through the order of reason, which as such is "human". Yet it is not the case that a particular instinctual end is only "good" for a person because of reason. It is good already inasmuch as it corresponds to a human "desire" and, already as such, it is "ordered" by reason.

It is evident, therefore, that reason, on the one hand, begins with concrete, particular evidence, or, in general, that it begins with the individual character of the ever particular condition of "nature", that is, with the situation. On the other hand, its order is "correct", namely, appropriate for the situation and consequently concretely "good", only when it is already related to the individual character of the ever particular condition of "nature" and to the situation. Reason is "practical", at least in its completion, only when it does not confine its "ordering" to judgments but rather "prescribes" in such an effective way that the actual action is immediately affected by and follows it. Reason cannot achieve this without the will. Therefore, its commands are issued only after the "choice". The analysis of action sketched here shows reason's interaction with the will.³¹

If one is oriented toward the individual (and one must indeed be so), then, in turn, one cannot avoid seeing that the multiplicity of human nature and its open capacity for being is "shaped" within the concrete context of life also in the sense that dispositions or attitudes stabilize and can be regularly "practiced". These dispositions or attitudes establish open capacities as *habitus* (habits) or, as I would rather say, as structures, fostering determinate modes of action; that is, they predispose open capacities to these modes of action. A single action, therefore, can always be viewed as something belonging to a determinate structure of the capacity that accomplishes it, whether this structure be a virtue or vice.³² As practical, that is, as oriented toward the individual, reason, too, requires such a practice, namely, prudence (*prudentia*). Thomas often says about it that it "has something in striving". This means that the inclination toward the good is itself incorporated in this structure of the practical reason. The inclination toward the good is stabilized in the "good" structure of the capacity for striving,³³ and thus this structure can bring to bear its force toward the good.

³¹ With respect to this, compare PETA, pp. 30-35. The orientation toward the individual (alleged by Aristotle) becomes clear in the analysis of prudence, II-II. 47.

³² This is founded in the universal necessity that the open capacity not attain the determination of the act immediately, but only through particular dispositions, I-II. 49. 4. Conversely, the total *materia naturalis* (the object of moral philosophy) is then describable in the system of a doctrine of virtue.

³³ II-II. 47. 6 and *ad* 1.

With this position that gives prudence, as a virtue, the decisive role, we are removed from modern theories that determine what is moral by the norm and determine the norm as moral through its universality. For Thomas what is moral is the individual and, for this reason, even reason is directed toward the individual. Ethical systems of normative universality are forced to separate the moral realm, as a special one, from the realm of praxis. "The moral" is then the special case, perhaps only the controversial one. But for Thomas there is nothing in the realm of action that does not have moral significance. And even if this is not unconditionally true for many actions of a special kind (for instance, acts of production), still it is true *in individuo* (in individual), that is, in the individual actuality, the actualization of which can indeed not be without significance for the totality of life.³⁴

Of course Thomas is also aware, in his language, of what "norm" means. It may be taken as well-known that normative reason according to its own character is first of all "universal", and indeed can express itself in a universal principle that is the principle of every particular determination of norms.³⁵ But in general Thomas holds that when normative reason expresses itself in universal commands or imperatives, it does so with a view to a good revealing itself to it, a good only to be *ordered* by normative reason, rather than it being the case that the good first originates through reason's determination of norms.³⁶ This enables Thomas to mediate the universal with the particular in such a way that the entire extent of the realm of action is encompassed, something which the normative approach cannot achieve. Thomas' doctrine of what makes an action good can make it clear to us that a merely normative approach is insufficient for an ethics that undertakes a consideration of the totality of human praxis.

³⁴ I-II. 18. 7 and 8.

³⁵ Here one should reflect on the doctrine of "law", particularly *lex naturalis* (natural law), I-II, 91. 2 and I-II, 94.

³⁶ This is the meaning of the so-called "derivation" of the percepts of *lex naturalis* (natural law), from the *inclinaciones naturales* (natural inclinations), I-II. 94. 2.

MEANING THEORY:
TRANSCENDENTAL VS. LINGUISTIC PHILOSOPHY*

Peter Rohs

Translated by Vincent McCarthy

The present essay attempts to argue the case for a meaning theory based on transcendental philosophy. I wish to show that other meaning theories are unsatisfactory: that they necessarily either fall into psychologism or else limit themselves to describing meanings by translations. Any theory that describes the meaning of a linguistic expression in such a way that the theory is merely translated into another expression presupposed as understood is insufficient for posing philosophical questions. This is not a way to learn what meanings are nor what it is to understand a linguistic expression. Above all, the connection that exists between understanding sentence meanings and knowing states of affairs cannot be shown in this way. I would like to show that only an approach based on transcendental philosophy can make intelligible in what way knowing the real is based upon understanding meanings.

In my critique of linguistic philosophy's meaning theory, I shall make extensive reference to Ernst Tugendhat's *Vorlesung zur Einführung in die sprachanalytische Philosophie* (Introductory lectures to Linguistic-Analytic Philosophy).¹ I believe that this book has so

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¹ (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1976). Page numbers, in parentheses, refer to this work. I am grateful to the participants in a seminar held on this text at the University of Frankfurt-am-Main in the Winter Semester 1977-78 for numerous suggestions. I have been able to discuss this book and its numerous problems at great length on different occasions in particular with my friend Wolfgang Kuhlmann. My own views with regard to it first took shape in these discussions. For all encouragement through stimulation and disagreement I would like to express my heartfelt thanks.

many positive aspects that it is not unfair to single it out as representative of the linguistic approach. It develops the essential theses of this approach with great circumspection, and considers proposals competing with the linguistic camp with cautious critique. In particular, Tugendhat criticizes meaning theory that reverts to communication intention (Grice and others) on such solid grounds (232ff) that it seems permissible for me to dispense with this here. Such an approach always becomes circular, seeing that in intentions of any kind the understanding of meanings is always presupposed. One must explain intentions on the basis of meanings and not the other way around. I hope, therefore, that my critique of Tugendhat's work may not without reason lay claim to being applicable to the linguistic approach in general and not merely to certain deficiencies of a single book. In addition to critique, I would like to show the way in which a transcendental philosophical meaning theory seems to me to promise better.

From the very outset I would like to seize upon a fundamental thesis as common to both approaches: that the sentence is the primary meaning unit (55). The Kantian theory also contains this thesis, namely that judgment is the form in which the unity of transcendental apperception is fulfilled. In Kant too all ideas must be fundamentally of propositional structure. When Tugendhat shows that all non-propositional intentional forms of consciousness imply propositional forms (100f), he is thoroughly in agreement with the Kantian position.

In his discussion of transcendental philosophy's position (79ff), Tugendhat criticizes above all "the idea of a pre-linguistic relation to objects". "How then", he asks, "can a pre-linguistic reference to objects be thinkable without any logical structure?" (86) Now it is in fact doubtless correct that this sort of thing is unthinkable. However, according to Kant too reference to objects is based upon forms of judgment and categories, hence upon logical structures. Indeed, according to Kant propositional structure always underlies relation to an object because it is first through understanding as the "capacity to judge" that we are able to supply objects for knowing. Further on I would like to show that for Kant the form of judgment is indeed far more essential to the relation to an object than it is for the linguistic analytical approach, which on that account one could more properly reproach for thinking reference to objects without logical structure.

However this may be, the following are held fast as fundamental theses about which there ought to be no dispute: that the sentence is the primary meaning unit; that all ideas have propositional structure; that apparently non-propositional intentional modes of con-

sciousness are based on propositional modes. The question of the nature of meanings consequently leads to this: What is it to understand a sentence?

Tugendhat gives three successive answers to this question (and indeed with respect to assertoric sentences). I would like to show that all three are inadequate.

The first runs as follows: One understands an assertoric sentence when one knows its truth conditions. This is a thesis encountered repeatedly in similar forms in works on meaning theory. The concept of "truth conditions" is even regarded as precisely constitutive for semantics: "Semantics with no treatment of truth conditions is not semantics."² Not only are investigations of Lewis founded upon this concept but equally those of Davidson, Montague, and many others. Therefore, it is even more important to examine its usefulness for a philosophical meaning theory. What, then, are truth conditions?

Tugendhat has the following to say on this: "A condition is expressed in an if-clause. If that which someone asserts is to have a truth condition, we must keep a formulation of the following kind in view: 'that p is true, if...'" (254f). But what do the three dots stand for? One looks in vain in Tugendhat for a satisfying answer to this obvious question. There are two possibilities: In place of the dots, there could once again stand sentence p , or a sentence q that is different from p . The first possibility would result in the single implication direction from the rule of the redundancy theory of truth "that p is true $\equiv p$ " (249).³ According to it, we would understand sentence p if we know that p were p 's truth conditions. But what is it to know what the truth conditions are? (Tugendhat also speaks very often about the fact that one must "know" the truth conditions.) This implies without doubt that one understands the statement in the if-clause. One does not know the condition of a unless one knows what ' b ' means in " a , if b ". We thus obtain the following result: One understands sentence p if one knows that p is its truth condition, and one knows this only if one understands p . What one achieves in this outcome is easy to see.

² D. Lewis, "General Semantics", in, Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman (Eds.), *Semantics of Language* (Dordrecht and Boston: Reidel Publishing Co., 1972), 169-218, here esp. 169; originally published in *Synthese* 22. 18-67. See also the theses of the editors in the Introduction to the German collection in which the same essay appears: Siegfried Kanngieser and Gerd Lingruen (Eds.), *Studien zur Semantik* (Kronberg: Scriptor Verlag, 1974), 21f.

³ Obviously a single implication direction cannot at all suffice for truth conditions because otherwise, for example, logically contradictory sentences would become truth conditions for any sentence whatever. In that case, "that p is true if $2 = 1$ " is a true sentence, regardless of which statement may be p . One therefore requires equivalencies, in the preceding case the redundancy formula itself.

A sentence q that is different from p can also be put in place of the three dots in “that p is true, if...”. But this too has no useful outcome. From where do we get sentence q ? What, for example, must q be if p is the proposition “the Heidelberg Castle is red”? And how do we know in such cases, in which we no longer have any logical connection from the redundancy rule, whether the entire if-then sentence is true? Apart from this, understanding p too could at most be reduced to understanding q : One understands p , if one understands q . But there immediately arises the further question: When does one understand q ? If to understand q one must again understand a sentence r that is different from p and q (the truth condition of q), then we arrive at an infinite regress— all other unanswered questions entirely aside. Talk of truth conditions thus leads either to useless tautologies, when in the case of Tugendhat p itself takes the place of the dubious three dots (255, l. 3), or to an infinite regress, if a sentence different from p is to fill this space.

Condition-relations are in every instance states of affairs. There is no knowledge of states of affairs without an understanding of the corresponding sentences. This is the result of the theses set forth at the beginning. Tugendhat expressly emphasizes — above all in his discussion of Husserl — that the fact “that p ” can only be grasped by means of understanding “ p ”.⁴ Thus condition-relations can only be known when if-then sentences are understood. Even logically complex sentences must be understood in this way. From this it follows that one cannot seek to explain the understanding of assertoric sentences on the basis of knowing condition-relations. One must at least abandon the thesis that states of affairs can be identified only by means of sentences.

In addition, semantic theories that presuppose quantities of entities and of possible worlds as unproblematical (Montague, Lewis) are useless for philosophical purposes because the entities and, most of all, the possible worlds cannot be given apart from language. Moreover, expressions of function are only a special sort of linguistic expression. Functional relations (functions from possible worlds in designata and so forth) that are described in these theories in a purely formal manner must thus turn into special sentences, if definite meanings of definite linguistic expressions are to be described by them. Even these functional relations cannot thus be what one must know in order to understand a sentence. This also would merely constitute a statement of the type: Sentence p is understood if sentence q is understood. Such statements are, however, not what one

⁴ So already on 63f, then throughout Lectures 9 and 10; likewise 281 and frequently elsewhere.

seeks in a philosophical meaning theory.

Does that mean that a semantics on a Tarski basis is totally useless? In my opinion, this is in fact the case for the philosophical problem of meaning. Nevertheless, such a semantics can be very helpful when it comes to explaining semantic qualities of phrases (quantifier phrases, adverbial phrases, and so forth) *so long as it is presupposed* that simple sentences are to be understood. Hartry Field shows in his critique of Tarski's semantics⁵ that it only explains the semantic qualities of composite expressions by means of the semantic qualities of their individual components. This, however, is precisely what it really can do. For linguistic semantics, for which this is the principal task, a Tarski semantics might thus hold great interest, even if it yields nothing for that which is of concern to philosophers.

Nothing is to be gained, therefore, by truth-conditions for the question as to what it is to understand an assertoric sentence. But Tugendhat sees in them only a first step on the way to answering this question. This first step has not advanced us a bit. How will it be with the next?

The next explanation goes this way: One understands an assertoric sentence *p* when one knows its verification rules. There are a number of effective objections also to this thesis. An exception to it can be taken with the same arguments as in the preceding. On 265 Tugendhat sets forth a long list of theses on the meaning of assertoric sentences all of which take the form:⁶ One understands an assertoric sentence *p* if one knows that *q*. They differ from one another only as regards what variously stands for *q*. But knowing "that *q*" presupposes that *q* is understood. One cannot know "that *q*" if one does not understand *q*. On this account the sense of such theses seems generally dubious. They immediately lead to the question what it is to understand *q*.

This is especially the case in verification rules. Rules are in every instance sentences, however they may be by nature in their details.⁷ There are no such things as "extralinguistic rules" or "rules not in sentence form". Especially Tugendhat must grant this, seeing that,

⁵ Tarski, "Theorie der Wahrheit", in, M. Sukal (Ed.), *Moderne Sprachphilosophie* (1976), 123-48; originally published in *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1972), 347-75.

⁶ Even the last has this form, in point of fact, since "knowing a rule" implies a "knowing that..."

⁷ I would propose viewing sentences of the form "if *A*, then do *B*" as rules, where *A* would be a sentence and *B* a description of an action. If, however, also sentences of another form had to serve as rules, this would not affect my argument. Moreover, rules in any case will again be logically constructed sentences (as in the case of conditional sentences). Implied in this is that, in order to be able to understand rules, one must be able to understand sentences that are not rules.

as was said, he insists against Husserl that a state of affairs can only be grasped by understanding a sentence. This applies equally to rules. Rules too cannot be identified unless the sentences that they express are understood. One cannot know a state of affairs apart from understanding the sentence that corresponds to it, and one can just as little know a rule apart from understanding the sentence that formulates it. There are no given facts independent of language, and no more are there given rules independent of language. One may even say: If understanding meanings is to depend on the givenness of objective qualities independent of language, then it would be more reasonable to accept states of affairs as such than rules. In simple cases, states of affairs can be intuitively given, while rules are much more abstract. But just as knowledge of the state of affairs that the Heidelberg Castle is red is based upon understanding the sentence "the Heidelberg Castle is red", so knowledge of the rule "Dress warmly when it's cold" is based upon understanding this sentence. Tugendhat would fall back upon the object theory standpoint that he so contests if he granted something like a language-free knowing of rules. It would be very unfair to deny Husserl the possibility of a non-linguistic knowing of states of affairs but to reserve for himself the possibility of a non-linguistic knowing of rules. But certainly neither is possible. It is out of the question that knowing rules be a non-propositional mode of consciousness. Tugendhat himself has shown on solid grounds that apparently non-propositional modes of consciousness (such as seeing and so forth) are in reality propositional. What sort of sentences rules may consist of can be left unanswered. But that they are a sort of sentence cannot be in doubt. Knowing a rule always presupposes understanding a sentence.

It is clear from this, however, that if we reduce understanding sentences to knowing verification rules then once again we achieve nothing other than reducing understanding sentence p to understanding sentence q . The question of how one then understands sentence q remains unanswered just as was the case above. Does, for example, understanding a verification rule presuppose knowing a verification rule of the verification rule? Or are verification rules not assertoric sentences, so that understanding them amounts to understanding non-assertoric sentences? In reality the problem is not only put off but even multiplied: 1) Tugendhat speaks mostly of verification rules (plural) for a sentence, and 2) one must understand that not only these rules q_1, \dots, q_n but also the sentence that q_1, \dots, q_n are verification rules for p . One must thus understand a great many sentences in order to be able to understand a single one.

At this point it is still unclear on what grounds one knows that q is a verification rule for p . One can view this relation in the sense of

a normal definition as if we had here definitions of sentences instead of the usual definitions of concepts. Sentence p would then be "defined" by the fact that q is its verification rule. But just as the possibility of defining predicates yields little in the problem of *understanding* predicates, so it is here with the possibility of defining sentences.⁸ If the relation between p and its verification rule q is not thought of as a definition but, in the sense of a descriptive semantics, as a synthetic proposition, then it becomes quite clear that understanding p cannot be explained in this way.

Referring to rules leads in this way to an entirely superfluous and contentless doubling of that which is supposed to be understood. Tugendhat says, for example, "What the hearer understands when he understands a speaker's statement are the rules of use of the assertoric sentence" (248). That is, one understands an assertoric sentence when one understands some — never exactly stated — others. This intermediation of other linguistic expressions has not the least explanatory value, but is an absolutely vain and superfluous redundancy. This would become especially clear once one actually sought to employ a concrete sentence like "the Heidelberg Castle is red" for these other sentences (rules). Only indefiniteness can create the appearance that something has been explained. We understand linguistic expressions directly, not in a roundabout way via other expressions. Even if one allows the roundabout way, the problem still remains how one understands the others. Some place along the line there must be direct understanding. With this, the philosophical problem is posed for the first time. In understanding rules, understanding is no different from what it is in understanding assertoric sentences. It makes no sense to seek to understand the one through the other.

There is one further objection that I regard as extremely important in its content. This is based upon the question whether there really are verification rules for all assertoric sentences that we can understand. Connected with this is the question of what would be allowed as verification rules — a point that Tugendhat passes over in total silence.

It seems that there are very many sentences that, as usually understood, are assertive sentences, and that we also understand, but for which it would be difficult to state the verification rules — culinary

⁸ One can point out in passing that Tugendhat's theory has difficulty in explaining the understanding of definitions. Since, on the usual view, definitions can be neither true nor false, they have no truth conditions or verification rules. This is with the result that one also cannot know any. Tugendhat would be obliged to view them as practical sentences, although they are a poor fit for their description (512).

judgments about taste; aesthetic and moral judgments about worth; the utterances of mystics, metaphysicians, and the devout, and so forth. That one can understand such sentences seems to me an incontestable fact. But does that mean that there are verification rules for all of them?

On 116, for example, Tugendhat rightly emphasizes that sentences of the form "it is good that *p*" are asserted with a claim to objectivity and provability; and obviously we understand such sentences. But who knows their verification rules? Tugendhat remarks (122) — to excuse himself, as it were — that understanding assertoric sentences in which "good" occurs is based upon understanding non-assertoric sentences (the latter are treated in his book only as an appendix so that he can be relieved of the task of explaining the understanding of the former). But even if this is so, it changes nothing in the fact that here are assertoric sentences that we understand apart from knowing their verification rules.

The possibility of verifying general sentences meets up with a similar difficulty. How, for example, can we understand statements of physical laws about which nearly all philosophers are of the opinion that there is no possibility of verifying them? How can there be for them a verification rule "that is of such a nature that following it produces a positive result either for the speaker or for the opponent" (259)?

The fact that we can understand assertions of a certain kind is no proof that in such statements there is an intersubjective decision process about their truth value. That we can understand sentences of the form "it is good that *p*" is no argument against the view of some philosophers that there is no intersubjective decision process for such sentences. That we make a claim to provability does not answer the "quaestio juris", the question whether the claim is rightfully made, whether these sentences are provable.

The general problem is the following: If one understands the expression "verification rules" in a halfway strict sense, then there are verification rules only where there is the possibility of an intersubjectively testable decision about truth values (approximately in the realm that Kant designates as "experience"). From this would follow that there can be intelligible assertoric sentences only within this realm. We could speak intelligibly with one another in assertoric sentences only within the realm of experience — not, however, in the realm of religion, art, mystical experience, and so forth. However, this is quite simply factually false. Furthermore, ideas must always have propositional structure. Linguistic meanings belong, therefore, to all ideas. Everything that can pass through our heads must be potentially meaningful (in the linguistic sense). But this becomes

utterly impossible if meanings are supposed to depend upon intersubjective verification rules. There would only be the absurd effect that we could never have ideas with religious, aesthetic or similar content. But our understanding goes much further than the realm of provable experience and, in my view, there can be no question that this difference is indeed essential for language. For this reason no theory of meaning and of understanding that cannot give an account of this difference is acceptable.

Certainly it is true that our entire understanding must have an intuitive basis (taken in a very wide, comprehensive sense). There would surely be no religious statements if there were not something like a religious occurrence, experience, feeling, attunement. Such experience, however, surely does not constitute verification. In the same way, men would not have moral judgments if there were not also — in the same indefinite sense — “moral experience”. That everyone has some sort of “moral consciousness” is without question the basis of moral language. This too, however, is not simply verification. The question Tugendhat raises “But how can statements of the form ‘it is good that *p*’ and ‘it is better that *p* than that *q*’ be proven?” (116), cannot be answered simply by recourse to our moral feeling, although such sentences would not be current if there were not something like a moral feeling.

This is the intended sense of the question, what is to be allowed as a verification rule? Is this expression to be taken so broadly that the sense of beauty, moral feeling, mystical experience, perhaps even inner voice and similar things come under verification; that, being of the same order, they might all have the same function that “simple perception” has in linguistic philosophy? Or is it to be taken so narrowly that, if there is verification at all, it is at most in the realm of scientific experience and on the basis of direct observation? Determining what can validly serve as a verification rule would obviously be very necessary for evaluating the thesis that we can understand an assertoric sentence when we know its verification rules. Unfortunately, they are no place to be found.

With the broader concept, one is not subject to the objection that the realm of intelligible assertoric assertions would be inadmissibly narrowed; and one is bolstered by the fact that certainly our understanding in this sense must have an intuitive basis. But the question arises as to what “verification” means here. The narrow concept permits one to speak meaningfully of verification, but it leads to a senseless reduction of the realm of possible linguistic intelligibility. Moreover, one must then demand the basis upon which intersubjective verification is at all possible — just what is not self-evident — as well as the basis for limiting the realm in which this is to be the case.

The fact that these questions are surely not to be answered on the basis of linguistic analysis indicates that the linguistic analytic manner of doing philosophy cannot be self-grounded. It is simply not enough to claim dogmatically that perceptions can be intersubjectively verified and then not to bother about all that cannot be reduced to simple perceptions.

Hence we must demand of a philosophical semantics that, above all things, it not limit the realm of possible linguistic intelligibility in an indefensible manner — as though we could understand assertoric sentences only in the area of scientific experience. A philosophical semantics must satisfy the “principle of the universality of meanings” and thus do justice to the richness of language. By this principle I mean that it must be possible to relate the whole of our intentional thinking to linguistic meanings — something that is equally characteristic of a reflective scientist and of contemplative monk. It must therefore be possible for a philosophical semantics to give an account of how our linguistic competence far surpasses the realm of what we can know intersubjectively. This, however, is impossible upon the basis of the thesis that understanding an assertoric sentence means knowing its verification rules.

There are thus two objections that make this thesis seem to me worthless. The first is that rules are sentences, and with this the problem of understanding sentences, if reduced to understanding or knowing rules, is only forestalled. The second is that the postulate of the universality of meaning cannot be accounted for in this way. I think that I may thus conclude that the second step too has not advanced us.

The third step in Tugendhat's analysis can be regarded as the attempt to meet the first of the above-mentioned objections. It is said to be possible to “demonstrate” or “show” verification rules.

“If the truth condition consists of the fact that following the verification rule leads to success, then stating the truth condition of an assertion consists in demonstrating its verification rule or, put more simply, in showing how it is verified” (259).

The idea is that someone knows that q is the verification rule for p ; he does not, however, verbally communicate this to another but in some fashion imparts it by demonstration so that in the end the other also knows that q is the verification rule for p . This demonstrating is held to be “the stipulation of the truth condition of an assertion”. Is this approach satisfactory?

In the first place, we could be left uneasy by the fact that the problem from the outset is put in the form of how one who knows something is able to transmit it to another. Is this the philosophical problem of meaning and of understanding? From what source does

the one know what *he* knows? The problem of philosophy is, to be sure, not from what source pupils have their knowledge — to this one has the ready answer: from the teachers. The problem of philosophy is rather from what source the teachers have their knowledge. Not asking the question where knowledge comes from but only asking about transmitting from one who knows to one who does not know seems to me a matter of pedagogy rather than of philosophy. One sees, for example, that in this way the question from what source one then knows that *q* is the verification rule for *p* is smoothly sidestepped. The example of sentences of the form “it is good that *p*” shows that this is not a trivial question. There has been long-enduring conflict about how these sentences can be verified. The question is only apparently more trivial with reference to other sentences.

But let us leave this point for a minute. What happens when someone is shown how a certain statement is verified? Evidently a certain state of affairs is imparted to him. That *p* is to be verified in a certain way is also a state of affairs. “Demonstrating” or “showing” thus consists of someone bringing another to knowledge of a certain state of affairs not by verbal communication but in some non-verbal manner. The learner thus has to come to know a state of affairs, and, for his part, not by having it said to him but in some other way, “in the facts themselves”. Now the problem is how coming to know a state of affairs is related to understanding the sentence that expresses the state of affairs.

In this it again becomes evident that verification rules are a superfluous redundancy. It is a matter of the connection between coming to know states of affairs and understanding sentences. Moreover, this connection must be developed from the original state of affairs “that *p*”, and not from the compound “that *q* is a verification rule for *p*”. Compounding contributes nothing at all to answering the question. If one cannot come to know states of affairs at all, then one cannot of course come to know compound states of affairs. This would be clearer if *p* and *q* were actually to be stated concretely. Verification rules are hence superfluous for the entire matter.

One sees, in addition, that the teacher is likewise essentially dispensable. He is not (according to the supposition here) supposed to communicate a state of affairs verbally. His function, therefore, consists only in arranging and shaping states of affairs in a striking way. From a didactic point of view this is surely essential, but for the philosophical problem it does not matter whether a state of affairs that is to be learned is strikingly arranged by someone or is simply there as it is. The sole problem is how states of affairs are to be experienced at all and to what extent sentences must be understood

in the course of this. We can thus safely leave teachers and verification rules aside in order to turn to the genuine problem, which is how grasping states of affairs relates to understanding sentences.

We must, to be sure, note that the teacher not only gives "examples", that is, presents states of affairs in reality or refers to them, but also employs linguistic expressions in doing so. Since, according to the supposition, he is not to communicate states of affairs verbally (otherwise the affair would immediately become circular), this can only mean that he presents yet a further state of affairs, that is, that a certain phonetic expression is allied to a certain state of affairs. These are two different functions. In the case of children born deaf, for example, the difference is seen in the way that the second cannot be at all carried out.⁹ Children born deaf can of course know facts, however, and they understand sentences.

For the second function the teacher is indispensable. That a child who learns a language learns German and not French or English has surely to do with the fact that German is spoken in his environs, and not French or English. But that someone knows states of affairs and understands the meaning of sentences in connection with this is something else. For this aspect of the matter we can dispense with teachers (always with the supposition that the teacher does not verbally communicate states of affairs, on which account the learner must already be able to understand the corresponding sentences).

Demonstrating verification rules, since it has to do with imparting states of affairs and presupposes the capacity to know them, is thus no answer to a question but rather a statement of the problem.

According to Tugendhat, grasping the state of affairs "that p " presupposes understanding the rule for use for the corresponding sentence " p "; hence it is based upon the understanding of its meaning. Now, if coming to know a state of affairs presupposes grasping it, then it follows that coming to know a state of affairs presupposes understanding the corresponding meaning. One could then only show how sentence p is verified to someone who already understood the meaning of the corresponding sentence (of the sort " p is verified through action H " or " q is the verification rule for p "). Furthermore, if one can understand metalinguistic sentences, in which there are names for object-language sentences, only if one understands the object-language sentences named by them, then one can show only someone who already understands sentence p how it is verified.¹⁰

⁹ On this point, see Hans G. Furth, *Thinking Without Language* (New York: Free Press, 1966).

¹⁰ Even on other accounts, the view that language learning could begin precisely with metalinguistic sentences appears odd. If, however, in learning language one takes rules of use or verification rules as the point of departure, one must come to this opinion because

We see that also along this route no progress is made. In his theory, Tugendhat overlooks the fact that to be shown how a sentence is to be verified, or what the verification rule of a sentence is, is a special case of grasping states of affairs. If I show someone how I turn the radio on, then I teach him a state of affairs. If I show him how a sentence is to be verified, I do the same. What we need, therefore, is a theory that clears up the connection between understanding sentences and experiencing states of affairs (and this without useless redundancy in rules of use and verification). Knowing that one can demonstrate verification rules plays no part in such a theory, just as little as ascertaining that we can understand sentences is a part of semantics. To be sure, we can come to know states of affairs; but we seek to know something about the relation of the understanding of meanings to this capacity. In this theory, however, we learn nothing about this.

Thus the third step too has not amounted to progress. Up to now we still have nothing that holds firm in knowing what it is to understand an assertoric sentence. I now want to pass on to the question of understanding predicates — without further discussing details about predicative sentence form.¹¹

This section can be somewhat briefer since, in general, the very same objections are to be raised again.¹² Tugendhat goes on to say that in the case of a predicative assertion the verification rule of the sentence is founded upon the rules of use of both parts of the sentence (the particular and the predicate). The verification rule of a statement made by means of a predicative assertion "*Fa*" is grounded in, a) knowledge of how it is determined what object of various predicates the particular term "*a*" stands for and, b) knowledge of how it is determined that the predicate "*F*" fits some object (329). Tugendhat also terms the procedure for determining whether a predicate fits an object "verification" and accordingly comes to the conclusion that "To understand a predicate consequently means under-

the states of affairs to which these rules belong must always be expressed through metalinguistic sentences.

¹¹ Let me mention nonetheless that Tugendhat likes to employ a game-theory way of speaking when he describes understanding sentences; for example, "One understands an assertoric sentence if one knows the justification game the opening move of which it represents" (265). To know a game does not, however, merely presuppose that one knows the game rules (that is, once again, understands some sentences or other). During the game one must also know many states of affairs (about the present state of the game, about whose move it is, and so forth). The number of sentences *q* that indeed one must understand in order to be able to understand a single sentence *p* is thereby increased to infinity without anything being gained.

¹² Moreover the problem here is thoroughly treated in Puntel's review of Tugendhat's work (*Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 31[1977], 413ff). Puntel too refers to the circularity in Tugendhat's exposition.

standing its verification rule, that is, knowing how to determine whether or not it fits some object or other" (331).

Hence, according to this view, understanding a predicate also presupposes knowledge concerning a state of affairs, a "knowing that q ". If both expressions — "knowing the verification rules" and "knowing how it is determined..." — are equivalent, then knowing the rules is knowledge about a state of affairs, a knowledge that q . It is once again evident that the determinations are circular. Understanding of predicates presupposes knowledge of states of affairs, which in turn presupposes an understanding of sentences, which in turn presupposes an understanding of predicates, and so forth ad infinitum. With this, the questions at hand do not get raised: whether, for example, in verification rules for predicates the predicates themselves appear or not. In the verification rule for the predicate "red", does the predicate occur or not? If not, what does the rule then look like? However Tugendhat may decide about this, it once again turns out that the insertion of rules is a needless redundancy. At times one has the impression that Tugendhat would like to accept knowledge of rules and "knowing how it is determined..." as non-propositional modes of consciousness. That would mean that we must accept, after all, the object-theory of meaning that he rejected. These non-propositionally given rules would then be nothing other than the "attributes" for which the predicates should stand, and the view that "knowledge of the attribute cannot ground the understanding of the predicate but is for its part grounded in the latter" (207) would be turned into its opposite. Still, "knowing how it is determined..." always depends upon understanding a sentence.

Predicates as well are then to be introduced with the aid of positive and negative examples of perception. Now it is certainly not to be disputed that one can learn predicates such as "red" on the basis of sense perception. But the question remains what happens in such learning. If someone comprehends examples and counter-examples and a verification rule of a predicate is abstracted from them, then all of this is based upon experiencing states of affairs. Every individual example or counter-example is necessarily some kind of state of affairs (that, for example, something or other is red, something else not). The introduction of predicates thus makes use once again (as above in the case of sentences) of the capacity to know states of affairs. Once again the question is in what connection does knowing a state of affairs stand to understanding the sentence that expresses it. If understanding the sentence is presupposed for knowing the state of affairs, then it once again turns out that introducing predicates through examples and counter-examples presupposes that which it seeks to explain. What is thus required is the elucidation of

the connection between knowing states of affairs and understanding corresponding sentences. This elucidation is precisely what is not achieved by linguistic-analytical theory, indeed not even begun.

Tugendhat's distinction, moreover, between "quasi-predicates" and "predicates" is of no additional help. It is supposed to be characteristic of quasi-predicates that the situation in using them is of the same kind as the explanatory situation (208); that thus, for example, the predicate "red" is only used when something red is manifest in perception. What is more, quasi-predicates are supposed to function as independent linguistic expressions that do not need completing by means of a particular term (210). To elucidate, Tugendhat refers to children's language. A few things can be said against his distinction. But however this may be, even if it is allowed, none of the pressing questions are thereby answered. It alters neither the fact that a "knowing that..." must be based upon understanding a sentence nor that the comprehension one has of an example is the comprehension of a state of affairs. The distinction, therefore, has at the most a psychological meaning.

Tugendhat discusses particular terms at length. A large part of his book (approximately 337-483) is taken up with them. It seems to me nonetheless that even here his essential theses do not hold. Of course, this point does not have to do with the relation between the meaning theory of transcendental philosophy and linguistic analysis but only with a question of detail that is insignificant for this relation. Nonetheless I would like to say something about it.

The analyses of Strawson and Searle have shown that particular terms, insofar as they introduce something into a proposition by identifying it, can be analyzable into presupposed propositions. In Strawson, for example, it is in the sense:

"Here the thought of the definitely identified particular is resolved into that of a proposition which as a whole individuates the particular, but contains no part introducing it."¹³

Searle, on the basis of similar analyses, rightly concludes:

"One might say: underlying our conception of any particular object is a true, uniquely existential proposition.... For these reasons reference is — in one sense of 'logical' — of no logical interest whatsoever. For each proposition containing a reference we can substitute an existential proposition which has the same truth condition as the original."¹⁴

This "resolution" of particular terms into presupposed sentences does

¹³ P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959), 210.

¹⁴ J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 93f.

not lead to an infinite regress:

"For we can always count on arriving, in the end, at some existential proposition, which may indeed contain demonstrative elements, but no part of which introduces, or definitely identifies, a particular term, though the proposition as a whole may be said to present a particular term."¹⁵

The identifying mark of a single object is without doubt a linguistic achievement that is possible as independent. Now Tugendhat himself states that such independent linguistic achievements can only be completed in whole sentences (366). This on its own also corresponds to the view that the sentence is the primary meaning unit. Insofar as particular terms identify something, they have no elementary function at all but stand for sentences. The item that stands over against the predicate in a statement, if the item is taken as such and for itself and not in reference to other presupposed sentences, can introduce no identifying element into a statement. It can on this account be determined only as a "variable" that has no other function than that something can be predicated of it and which, apart from this, effects nothing at all. It is a mere X to which predicates refer. Insofar as the particular term is more than such an indeterminate X and introduces some identifying element into a statement, it must possible for it to be analyzed into presupposed sentences.

According to Tugendhat, the manner of using particular terms is grounded in referential connections between different types of such terms: "In particular terms that stand for perceptible objects, one knows for which object an expression stands when one knows to what other particular term an expression refers" (483). These referential or substitutability-relations, however, are based upon identifying sentences of the form $m_x = n_y$ (473), where m_x is a particular term of the type X and n_y one of the type Y . Yet such identity sentences must be empirical. One sees this when, for example, one understands that m_x is a demonstrative mark and n_y is an objectively localizing particular term. For deciding about the truth value of identity sentences the object of reference of particular terms must already be established. In other words, one can only know to what others a particular term refers if one knows for what object it stands, because only then can one know which sentences of the form $m_x = n_y$ are true and which are not. Identifying particular terms must not be analyzed into such identity sentences but (as Strawson and Searle correctly add) into existential sentences; and for this very reason they have no fundamental meaning.

To support this view, Tugendhat appeals to the fact that an object is only specified if at the same time the verification situation is speci-

¹⁵ Strawson, *Individuals*, 193.

fied, in which it can be ascertained whether the perceptual predicates asserted of an object fit the object (416). But this is only possible by means of localizing *marks* that determine the perceptual situation relative to other perceptual situations. But perceptual- or, as the case may be, verification-situations must be such independently of whether they are localized. It cannot be that a situation that is still not a verification situation because it is not yet localized becomes a verification situation by becoming localized. This holds all the more, by analogy, for perceptual situations. But this means that the object relations that intrinsically belong to perception- or, as the case may be, verification-situations must be possible independently of these localizations.

A situation becomes a verification situation by virtue of the fact that in it a relation to objects is possible in which *the subject is invariable*. Whether this is possible or not is, however, independent of whether the situation itself is localized and thus becomes determined in relation to other situations. The possibility of this relation to objects in which the subject is invariable is, however, not at all treated as a problem by Tugendhat but simply presupposed. The invariability of the subject must precede situational independence and it is the former that is constitutive of the relation to objects.

If (as 452 asserts) objectifying a perceptual situation were required in order to render a truth relation possible, then there could be no truth relation at all. A perceptual situation can be objectified at most in whole sentences, certainly not merely through particular terms. It must, however, be possible to verify these sentences. The object relation is constituted on the basis of truth. They must thus be sentences *in* a verification situation. If the objectification of the verification had to precede the truth relation, the truth relation would be impossible. There would then have to be verifiable sentences *about* verification situations before sentences could be verified *in* verification situations. Just as, according to Tugendhat, understanding language seems to begin in metalanguage — in understanding rules which say something about language — so it seems here that the objective relation to verification situations precedes the subject's relating itself to objects in verification situations. Yet objectifying can only occur in sentences, not in particular terms. It must be possible for these sentences to receive a validity in which the subject is invariable. By this means the situation becomes one of verification. Moreover, this must be possible without the situation itself being objectified, because otherwise objectification could not come about at all. In construing that objectifying could happen merely through particular terms, Tugendhat overlooks the fact that sentences must be verified for them. It is not particular terms but sen-

tences that are the primary meaning units.

The problem of particular terms, as was mentioned above, is irrelevant to our main question (as expressed in this article's title). This is a result of the fact that, as Searle says, reference is of no logical interest. The main question must be decided on the basis of the problem of sentence meaning. In this connection it has been shown that the linguistic analytical approach only goes around in circles when it seeks to explain understanding sentences by means of knowing truth conditions or verification rules. On this account, calling for demonstration by examples has proven equally unsatisfactory. It is nothing more than an appeal to our capacity to grasp states of affairs such as "this is red". By it, we still learn nothing about how this grasping is related to understanding corresponding sentences. If one accepts with Tugendhat that identifying states of affairs presupposes understanding these sentences, then it follows that he who is to learn the sentence cannot grasp the examples (that is, the states of affairs in which they consist). Then, demonstration has no function. The linguistic analytical theory of understanding sentences has therefore proven unsatisfactory.

This outcome is still no argument in favor of transcendental philosophy. For this reason I would like to complete my discussion by presenting the main elements of a treatment of the problem of meaning based on transcendental philosophy, in order to make apparent through the contrast how this way of regarding the problem differs. To be sure, one cannot expect here a systematic presentation of transcendental philosophy.

Transcendental philosophy can generally be described as a theory of intuition. It explores the logical and ontological structures that must belong to intuition in order for it to be adequate to verify propositions and to refer us to objects.¹⁶ The main point in this is that intuition itself must have a certain invariability with regard to mental states if it is to have this capacity. Intuition cannot be merely something mental-immanent like a "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*) because the invariability with regard to mental states that is necessary for verification would then be impossible. Wittgenstein writes: "Meaning is as little an experience as intending."¹⁷ Transcendental philo-

¹⁶ We may employ the term "intuition" (*Anschauung*) here in a sense different from Kant to the extent that we do not seek to view it as an opposite of "thinking". "Intuition" is to be understood more or less as the intuitive, non-discursive decision about the truth value of sentences — a decision that does not presuppose that the truth value of other sentences is already known — as a "seeing that something is the case". This characterization is not to imply that this achievement would be possible apart from "thinking". On the contrary, it is precisely the conceptual moments of this achievement that must be explored. We "see" nonetheless that something is the case.

sophy explicates, so to speak, the grounds on which and the manner in which intuition is not experience. It explains invariability with regard to mental states by having recourse to an "enduring, abiding self", an "original apperception", a pure, non-sensuous ego. Because by definition such cannot be objects of empirical-psychological knowledge, transcendental philosophy must be an *a priori* theory. Invariability of intuition with regard to mental states — the transcending of internal mental states in intuition — is thus to be explained in *a priori* statements about non-sensuous subjectivity and about "transcendental spontaneity". Reduced to its most essential, this seems to me to be the sense of statements such as: Sensuous feelings must be included in the unity of transcendental apperception in order to be referable to objects.

Such a theory can only succeed in explaining meanings on the basis of these invariable acts. Meanings too are based upon an invariability with regard to mental states. Frege attempted to make this fact emphatically clear. Since I regard it as very important, I would like to quote him at some length:

Thoughts are independent of our thinking. A thought does not belong specially to the person who thinks it, as an idea does to the person who has it: whoever thinks it encounters it in the same way, as the same thought. Otherwise two people would never attach the same thought to the same sentence.¹⁸

Combine ideas and you still have an idea and the most varied and elaborate associations can make no difference....The law of gravitation can never come into existence in this way, for this law is quite independent of anything that goes on in my mind and how my ideas change and fluctuate. But still the grasping of this law is a mental process! Yes, indeed, but it is a process which takes place in the very confines of the mental and which for that reason cannot be completely understood from a psychological standpoint. For in grasping the law something comes into view the nature of which is no longer mental in the proper sense, namely the thought; and this process is perhaps the most mysterious of all. But just because it is mental in character we do not need to concern ourselves with it in logic. It is enough for us that we can grasp thoughts and recognize them to be true; how this takes place is a question in its own right.¹⁹

Frege adds a note here:

I should say that this question is still far from being grasped in all its dif-

¹⁷ *Schriften* I (1960), 529; *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 217.

¹⁸ Gottlob Frege, *Schriften zur Logik und Sprachphilosophie*, ed. by G. Gabriel (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1971), 36; or *Posthumous Writings*, trans. Peter Long and Roger White (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 127.

¹⁹ Frege, *Schriften*, 63f; *Posthumous Writings*, 145.

ficulty. People are usually quite content to smuggle thinking in through a back door into the imagination, so that they don't themselves know how it got in.

This "question in its own right", this "question still far from being grasped in its difficulty" is the theme of transcendental philosophy. It seeks to comprehend thinking so that it is not merely "smuggled in through the back door into imagination", but so that one knows "how it got in" — upon which rests its invariability in relation to mental states in verifying intuitions as well as in the meaningful having of ideas (*Vorstellen*). These acts that transcend the mental are what are to be understood as "transcendental spontaneity" in transcendental philosophy.

Frege takes these thoughts as fully independent of us and of our thought processes because he is of the opinion that their invariability is not to be otherwise understood. For him, subjective spontaneity is by its very nature "act of consciousness" or "idea linking". If thoughts were dependent upon such an activity, it would follow that they would have to "belong specially to the one who thinks" them as ideas do to the person who has them. Since this cannot be, for him they are "thoughts independent of our thinking". A passive grasping of such thoughts, however, is not possible because it could not then be sensuous, and our relation to thoughts must be spontaneous, not passive. On the other hand, invariability cannot be doubted. Thus the only remaining possibility is that thoughts are grasped as products of transcendental spontaneity. Their invariability to ideas is explained on the basis of the essence of the "enduring, abiding self", not on the basis of being-in-itself.

In my opinion, it can be shown in this way that the invariability of thoughts can be connected to the fact that any ideas can have meaning in this sense. Ideas are always of propositional structure but extend further than the possibility of intersubjective determination about truth values. It must also be possible that there be also meanings where there are no intersubjectively verifiable sentences (in judgments about taste, utterances of mystical experience, and so forth). The thesis that understanding sentences goes back to knowing verification rules was criticized above for limiting the realm of the intelligible in a totally inadmissible manner and contradicts the fact that it must be possible for all ideas to have meaning if verification is understood as intersubjective decisions about truth values. The approach of transcendental philosophy counters this objection and remains in agreement with the facts.

This too, by the way, is an argument in favor of the fact that thoughts cannot exist completely independent of us. It would be utterly incomprehensible that the most arbitrary ideas have corres-

ponding thoughts in themselves that exist in advance of them. Transcendental philosophy allows an explanation for this, since it must be possible for *all* my ideas (even totally arbitrary ones) to be accompanied by the enduring and abiding self. On this is based the fact that all my ideas can be connected to (Fregian) thoughts.

Only the transcendental philosophical approach seems to me, therefore, to offer the possibility of a meaning theory that neither offers mere translations nor falls into psychologism. Gilbert Harman, in his essay, "Meaning Theories and Truth Theories", criticized with good reason those theories that seek to describe meanings by stating truth conditions. His own proposal, however, leads back to psychologism.

For me the meaning of the relevant sentences is connected with the kind of outlook they normally express. This is not in the first instance described by their truth conditions but is something psychological. A view or a belief is a psychological state, defined by its role in a system of states that are altered by sense data, conclusion, and thought, and that influence action. To state a belief means to state its role in such a system of ideas. To state the meaning of a particular sentence means to state a belief, that is, a role in a world of representations.²⁰

This view collapses, however, under [[the weight of]] Frege's insights. Only transcendental philosophy, it seems to me, can lead out of the fruitless alternative "truth conditions — the psychological". For transcendental philosophy is the theory that does not smuggle thinking in through a rear door but rather begins straight off with it. All other meaning theories either represent mere exercises in translation or else are untrustworthy psychology.

To be sure, the transcendental philosophical approach provides no "criteria" for what it means to understand a particular sentence. This follows from its character as a "theory of intuition". But it remains to be asked if it is meaningful to demand such criteria. Kant has explained that "of the truth of the knowledge, so far as its material is concerned, no general mark can be demanded".²¹ This is based upon the fact that what intuition effects in verification cannot be reformulated into a logical relation between sentences. A criterion can always be only a sentence. If there were a criterion, then it would have to be possible for the achievement of intuition in verifying a sentence to be replaced by a logical relation between the sentence to be verified and the criterion. But this is impossible.

²⁰ In, Michael Sukale (Ed.), *Moderne Sprachphilosophie* (1976), 161-74; on this point see 170. <A slightly different version of the same essay appeared as "Meaning and Semantics" in, Milton F. Munitz and Peter K. Unger (Eds.), *Semantics and Philosophy* (New York, 1975), 1-16.>

²¹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft/Critique of Pure Reason*, B 94.

Neither can that which intuition effects in understanding a sentence be interpreted as a logical relation between sentences. One can indeed translate one sentence into another, or paraphrase it through other sentences. Apart from the fact that the translated or paraphrased sentence must already be understood for testing the correctness of the translation or paraphrase, however, one does not in this way obtain criteria for what it means to understand a specific sentence. If one restates meanings verbally in this manner, then one must require the same intuitive acts for understanding the meanings employed thereby. Hence no progress has been made in the description of meanings. By proceeding in this manner one never allows the genuine problematic to become the theme, namely invariability by intuitions, that is, that which is really effected in understanding. But this is the only thing that can reasonably be demanded here.

Generally speaking, there are two tasks for meaning theory. First, the semantic properties of compound expressions must be explained by means of the semantic properties of their simple components. This is a matter of linguistic semantics. In this way, what meanings really are does not need to be brought up, nor need that upon which understanding is based. All of this is presupposed here (in relation with the components). On this account, it is also not a bad thing for such a theory when it fulfills its task by means of a statement of metalinguistic rules, when it, therefore, only verbally restates the compounds once again. For it is not expected that what it really means to understand sentences will find an answer here.

The simple components are, however, already sentences, since sentences are the primary meaning units. (Predicates are always "predicates of possible judgments";²² so that the explanation of understanding predicates coincides with that of understanding sentences. In addition, the understanding of variables, to which the predicates are related, is likewise bound up in understanding their function in the sentence.) This leads to mere running in circles, if one again seeks to restate meanings verbally. Meanings must in the end be intuitively understood one way or another. The intuitive act can indeed be made into the object of a theoretical examination (in transcendental philosophy), but can no longer be reformulated in sentences. What meanings are and what understanding is based upon can only be explicated in an examination of intuitive acts. Such an examination does not, however, lead to the verbal descriptions of meanings intuitively understood or to criteria. Equally, the Kantian proposition that, if an object relation is to take place, sensations must be brought under the unity of apperception, does not lead to a criterion for

²² Ibid.

what it means to see a red castle. It is simply meaningless to demand such criteria and in this way to seek to go behind intuition. In point of fact, even a semantics of the Tugendhat type can state no such criteria. Within it, the facts get concealed that his semantics usually speaks only indefinitely of sentences p , q and continually makes reference to rules that it does not explicitly formulate. Rules that cannot be reformulated into words (see in Tugendhat's work, for example, 188 or 213) are like criteria that cannot be formulated into words: mere tricks that give us nothing to lay hold upon.

The impossibility of such criteria is based upon the fundamental impossibility (that Kant too recognized) of getting behind intuition. This impossibility does not, however, indicate that intuition is language-free, containing no logical structures. Intuition is propositional in structure; it is based upon the "capacity to judge". But the fact that every intuition is propositional in structure does not indicate that real intuiting could be interpreted as dealing with criteria or rules. The understanding of meanings is likewise an intuiting, for which the aforesaid is valid. There is on this account no sentence q that might be a meaningful completion of the sentence type: A person understands the sentence "the Heidelberg Castle is red", if q .

But if understanding is thus grasped as a kind of intuition, does not transcendental philosophy fully succumb to an "object theory" approach to meaning theory? Certainly in one specific sense. Meanings are something objectively actual that is not linguistic. They are also invariable over against the multiplicity of languages: A specific identical meaning can be expressed in different languages. Just as meaning does not specially belong to any specific person who has ideas, so too it does not belong to any particular language. Insofar as languages are multiple, arise in history, change and so forth, they belong on the side of the individual, in contrast to meanings. Meanings for their part neither arise nor do they change. If "Object theory" is, therefore, only to indicate that meanings possess such an invariable, non-sensuous reality, then the transcendental philosophical approach is, to be sure, thoroughly "objective theoretical".

In criticism of such views, Tugendhat rightly refers to the fact that we do not explain the meaning of a linguistic expression by the fact that we refer to such objective, non-sensuous entities. One cannot explain the meaning of any expression to anyone by showing an entity just as one shows a table or a tree.

This is indeed an objection against the view that meanings are something real in themselves and absolutely independent of us, but nevertheless not an argument against the supposition of such objective, invariable meanings. The objection is based upon the fact that we can only relate to meanings spontaneously, that they cannot be

given to us passively. Only each for himself can give himself these objects.

Proof that such a spontaneous relation does not imply that meanings belong particularly to each as mental quantities is the specific mark of transcendental philosophy. The relation is indeed the other way around: Since something absolutely independent of us can be given us only through sense experiences, but since these experiences have no intersubjectivity, that specific invariability which is given can only be based upon spontaneity in *all* instances — whether in the case of natural objects or meanings. Meanings, therefore, can be invariable, as over against ideas, not only in spite of their dependence upon subjective spontaneity; indeed if they were independent, they could not then be invariable.

The problem in the explanation of meanings is this: Setting aside the case of linguistic restatement (for example, in the explanation of foreign words) as without interest for us, how is grasping states of affairs related to understanding corresponding sentences? We have seen that this question remains unanswered by the linguistic analytical approach. Such a theory threatens to fall into objective theoretical interpretations at two points: firstly, if it lays claim to knowing rules or knowing that something is a rule for something that is not based upon understanding the sentence expressing the rule and, secondly, if it is required to accept a grasp of states of affairs (when examples are presented) that also has to be independent of understanding corresponding sentences. The entire matter about rules is a superfluous redundancy that can be dismissed without loss. One does not understand object-language sentences by a detour through some kind of metalinguistic sentences, but at once. The second point, however, contains the decisive problem.

If one seeks to instruct another in the use of the predicate "red" by means of examples and counter-examples, one will show him things that are red and others that are not. However, this is only useful if the party in question can "see" that some things are red and others not red. This seeing is a grasping of states of affairs. If, in order to be able to grasp these states of affairs, one must be able to understand the sentences "this is red", "this is not red", the whole affair becomes circular. Instruction would only occur when the other already understands the predicate — thus only when it is superfluous. For Tugendhat, the only alternative to this can be the object theory approach, the supposition that states of affairs can be seen apart from sentences needing to be understood. But a nonpropositional grasp of states of affairs is surely impossible. For Tugendhat there can be no solution here, because he does not at all discuss the relation of propositional structure to intuition.

The only possible solution is that propositional structure is the base of the intuitive relation to states of affairs. This is only possible, however, if intuition is not a passive "representation" of a reality that is independent of us. But, if it is, then that which is intuited (the state of affairs) is spontaneously actualized through intuition itself. If states of affairs are present independently of us, then indeed there must always be the possibility of a passive grasp of them, one that precisely as passive must be independent of the linguistic categorial structures of our thought.

Independent states of affairs, however they are approached, require "simple perception" — a non-conceptual grasping of states of affairs that is not mediated by the understanding of meanings (thus precisely what Tugendhat unjustifiably reproaches in transcendental philosophy). They appear in Tugendhat in the grasping of the examples presented (for example, 418 or 446). Such perceptions are impossible, however, for several reasons. There cannot be a propositional structure independent of thought and of "understanding as the capacity to judge". That which makes a state of affairs into such must thus proceed from thought, and this can only be so if spontaneity underlies the intuitive grasp of states of affairs. Naturally, this does not mean that sense perceptions do not play a role in this, but that they are nothing in themselves. We cannot even be conscious of them by themselves.

As has been said, it does not follow from this that states of affairs must be something immanent in ideas. There is a spontaneity that itself is invariable as over against mental states and upon this is based the fact that we intuit states of affairs and can understand meanings. Meanings are not thereby anything different from intuitions, insofar as they are invariable as over against mental states. Such an invariability must always be structured through the "form of judgment". In Kantian language, intuition must be determined with reference to the form of judgment. Invariability itself, however, depends upon the nonsensuousness of the abiding and enduring self.

On this account, one can rightly say that meaning is the "*mode of givenness*" of an object (on this point, see, in Tugendhat, for example, 148). But by "mode of givenness" one must not mean something like whether one sees a particular matter more from the right than from the left. By the mode of givenness, then, can only be meant the mode of invariability over against mental states that belong to each intuition. Because this invariability can belong to any ideas whatever, there are linguistic meanings for all ideas. The abiding and enduring self must be a possible accompaniment of all my ideas. Meanings are thus thoroughly allied to ideas and cannot be differentiated from them as to content (this is correct in the above-

cited interpretation of G. Harman). Nevertheless they are not something psychological and are themselves *not* ideas. But no more are they some kind of thing with a marking on it to which one could point.

For this reason, meanings cannot be demonstrated at all by examples. Naturally, one can show someone who does not know what "ultrablue" is a color chart containing this color. But it is decisive that the comprehension of how the chart is set up is something that cannot be nonpropositional, that meaning thus belongs to this comprehension and cannot be formed only afterwards from a previous nonlinguistic or nonpropositional grasp of the state of affairs. As has been shown, this grasp is based upon transcendental spontaneity; and for it the demonstration of another person is entirely without significance (or, in any case, only significant from a didactic point of view). Exactly the same thing happens whether a state of affairs which is grasped is demonstrated to one by another or is not demonstrated. Meanings must in both instances underlie grasping states of affairs. There is no grasping of states of affairs at all apart from understanding the corresponding meanings. What one can learn from another is only whether it is called "red", "rot", or "rouge". In contrast to these differences, the meaning itself is invariable. For this reason even children born unable to hear and who know nothing about such things as "red", "rot", or "rouge" grasp states of affairs, and for them too this is based upon the understanding of meanings, upon the fact that the "mode of givenness" of invariability over against mental states belongs to what is intuitively given.

Contrary to the view of Tugendhat, the use of signs must therefore be conceived as derivative (in this connection, see, for example, page 180). The use of signs presupposes knowing rules. One must know rules of use in order to be able to use signs. But knowing rules presupposes understanding meanings. One cannot know a rule without having understood a sentence meaning. It appears to me that there can be no doubt of this order in the relation of dependency. One also cannot introduce here reciprocal relations of dependency because this would have impossible results. If one, for example, had to know rules in order to be able to use signs, but in order to be able to know rules had already to be able to use signs, both would be impossible. It is similar to the case of knowing rules and understanding meanings. When understanding meanings is to be explained by knowing rules, it leads to the circle already referred to.

Thus the first and basic thing is understanding sentence meanings. This is based upon the properly transcendental act, upon the capacity to produce the synthesis of predication invariable to mental states. We understand a meaning when an idea is "determined with

regard to its form of judgment" and "brought to the objective unity of apperception" (that is, posited as invariable). The second thing, then, is knowing rules. This is simply a matter of understanding certain sentence meanings. The third thing is the use of signs, which is based upon knowing special rules.

In this way it becomes intelligible why sign systems (the natural languages) are individual and historical, while meanings are in no way individual and historical but invariable, intersubjective and nonsensual (and indeed invariable even over against the sign systems, the natural languages). It is only the signs and not the meanings that one learns from others. One can only then learn something from another if one already understands meanings.

The transcendental philosophical approach is thus, I think, the only approach for meaning theory that is not object theoretical (in Tugendhat's sense) and that is thus not compelled to accept a grasp of states of affairs which precedes the understanding of meanings. In all other theories there has to be a "simple perception" that is *not* blind, a conceptless grasping of states of affairs. Only in the transcendental philosophical approach does it obtain that "intuitions without concepts are blind". In this way the idealistic idea of "constitution" and of "producing" objects is fundamental: If the real world contains states of affairs independent of the knowing subject, then there is no other possibility than that these states of affairs, which are simply perceived by means of conceptless intuitions and which cannot be blind, must be grasped passively. Only according to a theory of transcendental spontaneity can the understanding of meaning provide the basis for grasping states of affairs. The independence of states of affairs from our spontaneity always implies the necessity of a grasping of them which precedes the understanding of meanings and occurs independently of it. It is only because the real objects are "appearance" that their grasp can be based upon understanding meanings.

The connection that exists between truth and meanings is also visible only in such a theory. This connection seems to be exhibited in the linguistic analytic theory too, as it relies on truth conditions and verification rules for the understanding of meanings. But, in this theory, that we are able to make verifications remains an unproven presupposition. It says nothing about whether and to what extent this is possible. It brings forward no arguments against philosophers who hold "justification thinking" to have failed. It says nothing about the confines within which verification can occur, nothing about the details of statements of law, moral norm sentences and so forth. This meaning theory is thus fully cut off from a theory of verification, apart from the fact that the possibility of verification is

presupposed as a fact. The possibility of verification is also exhibited in this theory as not dependent upon the fact that we can have meanings. It is otherwise for the transcendental philosophical approach for which the abiding and enduring self is conceived not only as the ground for the ability to have meanings but (in another function) equally as the ground of the possibility of intersubjective recognition. Thus, what we really have is a unitary theory of understanding *and* verification, constructed on a single ground, while in the case of the linguistic analytical approach this is out of the question. This seems to me to be almost the most important argument in favor of the transcendental philosophical approach. For truth and meaning in fact stand in the closest relation — admittedly not in the simple manner such that only such sentences could have meaning for which there is an intersubjective decision process and verification rules (in which it is presupposed that this is the case for any kind of sentences) — but in such a way that the different forms of intersubjectivity, which are present in meanings or verifications, are grounded in the same “capacity” of subjectivity, in the ability for acts that are invariable over against mental states.

As I believe I have shown in another place,²³ this ability is based on the fact that we exist in ecstatic time, because the transcending of mental conditionality happens originally in the flow of time. For this reason I regard the question how we can know about the flow of time as so fundamental that no kind of philosophizing that withdraws from answering this question can be regarded as adequate.

From Heidegger comes the insight that ecstatic time is the essence of transcendental apperception, that is, is that in which this transcending takes place. Frege saw that the connections which constitute the essence of thinking are not associations of ideas; that in the case of thinking it is not ideas that are connected but things, properties, concepts, and relations; and that in language the distinctive character of a thought finds expression in the copula.²⁴ In my view, both of these very fundamental insights of modern philosophy can come into their own only in connection with each other and only on the basis of Kantian transcendental philosophy. For this reason I call for a new look at the Kantian approach based upon both of these insights.

²³ In my essay “Transzendente Apperzeption und ursprüngliche Zeitlichkeit”, in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 31 (1977), 191-216.

²⁴ Frege, *Schriften*, 23; *Posthumous Writings*, 174.

KNOWING AND THINKING:
ON THE STRUCTURE AND HISTORY OF
THE TRANSCENDENTAL METHOD IN PHILOSOPHY*

Hermann Krings

Translated by Helga Schmettau
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*"Everyone knows how to think,
but many are spared the effort."*
— Curt Goetz

I

The expression "transcendental" easily arouses intellectual displeasure. When compared with enlightened rationality, it has the notoriety of the metaphysical. This should not be surprising to us if we recall that Kant formulated it as the concept of that very reflection

* Translated from "Erkennen und Denken: Zur Struktur und Geschichte der transzendentalen Verfahrens in der Philosophie", in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 1979.

In the Transcendental Analytic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant presents those concepts and basic principles of the pure understanding that *a priori* ground the object of experience and objective knowledge of it. This analytic is in itself not objective knowledge, but sets forth a logical construct (a "logic of truth") that is designated transcendental because it has to do with the preobjective synthesis of intuitions through pure concepts. Such a grounding construct must be thought, and its thinking does not here serve knowledge, but rather grasping (*begreifen*): what are grasped are the (transcendental) conditions of knowledge. These are grasped when their totality can be thought, this is to say, when a concept of the unconditioned is thought as the ground of all conditions. This paper works through the various functions of understanding (knowledge) and reason (thought) and represents with Kant the thesis that knowledge requires not only understanding but reason as well, the thinking of reason being an act of freedom.

by which is examined whether and how metaphysics as a science might be possible. This method of inquiry designated “transcendental” may well have done away with rational metaphysics — not, however, with the metaphysics of reason! The *Critique of Pure Reason* is “the complete idea of transcendental philosophy” (B 28) and draws, as such, “the entire outline of a system of metaphysics”. (XXIII)

But as we all know, interpretations of Kant do diverge. Some see him as the founder of a theory pertaining to the formulation of laws; they maintain, however, that this theory is possible — indeed can be carried out more clearly — apart from the doctrine of transcendental constitutions, and certainly without metaphysics. Others see him precisely as the founder of a doctrine of the object as constituted by the transcendental subject. Others again stress his constructive criticism of metaphysics and thus consider the doctrine of practical reason and its primacy of major importance. In any case, the expression “transcendental” designates a potential of critical reflection — one which some would like to see reduced to a metatheory of scientific theory-building; which others consider precisely as such to be the principal point; and which a third group sees as the reformed point of entry into a new metaphysics.

Displeasure with the expression “transcendental”, however, is not based upon the unsettled suspicion that what we have here might represent a substitute metaphysics. Its phonetic proximity to the term “transcendent” alone renders it suspect — as does the by no means clear conceptual demarcation in Kant’s work, as does also his actual usage of terms, which present certain difficulties (see, for example, B 351-53). The phonetic affinity invites the association with secularized religiosity. And from there it is but a small step to the use of “transcendental” in designating oriental meditation and relaxation techniques. If German Idealism did not spoil the reputation of the Kantian term, the word’s usage as a western name for an eastern import compromised it totally.

Should we not, perhaps, drop the expression “transcendental” entirely? Such good advice, coming from experienced contemporary philosophers, can be heard everywhere. To be sure, many a misunderstanding could thus disappear — but with it perhaps also a matter the very non-disappearance of which may be of central concern. Let us not forget that the Greek prefix *meta*, too, has survived without harm its thousands of years of use in the word metaphysics, and is used without hesitation in expressions such as metatheory, metalanguage, and other metaformulations. Why shouldn’t we be able to designate one method of inquiry as transcendental, next to an analytical, a dialectical, and other methods, if a method so designated should prove to be useful or even rational_v. Method as well as desig-

nation shall be examined in what follows.

II

The expression "transcendental" already possesses a history in the technical language of philosophy. In the earlier use which characterizes certain first concepts as "*transcendentalia*", the expression *nomen transcendens* means that this word neither designates a class by itself nor can its conceptual content be understood as subsumed under a generic concept — and that thus it goes beyond even the highest generic concept. Transcendental concepts are such notions as "unum", "bonum", "aliquid", and others. Their meaning, to be sure, is not merely formal; yet the expression "transcendental" serves here mainly as a designation of a specific class of concepts within the traditional dialectic. It was a matter of distinguishing transcendental concepts from those of specific, generic, and highest generic concepts. One peculiarity of these concepts must here be emphasized. They are always presupposed when and wherever concepts are used at all. In other words these terms are always implied whenever the word "to be" or "is" is spoken. The sentence, "Socrates is a human being" is, purely as a sentence and disregarding its content, rich in presuppositions. The material-logical presuppositions of the sentence are designated *conditiones sine qua non* by the use of the term "transcendental". They are connotations of the concept of being, or of the synthesis of sentence structure, which are inevitable and do not permit of being overtaken by dialectic. We encounter this characteristic quality, that is, the impossibility of being overtaken, everywhere in knowledge and speaking as the circularity of transcendental reflection: these concepts do not become the object of reflection apart from already being presupposed.

III

It was Kant who first rendered the expression "transcendental" a technical philosophical term. In analyzing the constitution of the objects of knowledge, Kant found that these do not originate as images of external objects but rather that several factors or elements are involved in the process. He generally distinguished between those constitutive factors that can be traced back to a faculty of receptivity, that is, to the faculty of sense, on the one hand, and those traceable to a faculty of synthesis and its rules, on the other. Within each of these constitutive factors he makes another general distinction, this being between the *a priori* elements — that is, those elements that must be thought of as "before" all experience or independent of all experience — such as pure intuition as well as pure concepts and

principles of pure understanding, and *a posteriori* elements such as empirical intuition and empirical concepts and laws. Kant calls "transcendental" primarily that form of analysis which sets forth the *a priori* elements of what constitutes objects. It would follow that this concept refers not to a specific class of objects but rather to the constitutive elements or factors of an object as such. Analogous to what was mentioned above with regard to *transcendentalia*, the connotations of the object of experience as such — connotations that are inevitable and do not permit of being overtaken by dialectic — are called transcendental. Kant, taught and impressed by Hume, no longer says "being" (*Sein*) but rather, "object" (*Gegenstand*), and asks: What all is assumed or presupposed whenever a content is posited as an object (*Gegenstand*) of experience — as object for a subject? The analysis of subjectivity is called transcendental if it refers to objects always as objects for a subject.[#]

IV

Thus transcendental philosophy, according to Kant, concerns itself with the system of *a priori* concepts of objects as such (A 12). The concepts are "entirely independent of all experience" (B 3) or, in short, "before" all experience. But what "before" are we here talking about when we say, "before all experience"?

Knowledge (*Erkenntnis*ⁱⁱⁱ) has to do with objects. As such, it cannot, on principle, get "before" or "behind" the object, no matter what its nature may be. Every attempt to know a thing before the act of knowing (*Erkennen*) would again have an object, even if modified, and would again be knowing — knowing and object on a higher level of reflection. Hegel has shown this process of consciousness in *The Phenomenology of Mind*: Consciousness moves as a process within which a particular "new true object" for knowledge originates (II, 70). Knowing "before" all knowing would be a self-contradictory concept. These remarks, however, accurate though they may be, fail, inasmuch as they claim to represent a critique of Kant's critique of reason, to take into account the principal Kantian thesis. For Kant's "elementary transcendental doctrine" does by no means aim for a knowing "before" all knowing or before all experience — neither in the sense of a knowledge of more subtle objects (this would be metaphysics) nor that of a more subtle knowledge of these objects. It also does not aim for a knowledge of subjectivity in the sense of a self-knowledge of knowing as a "tool". Rather, the transcendental procedure of thought aims for a logic — to be precise, for a logic of the genesis of the object of experience or for a "logic of truth", as Kant has clearly stated. The elementary analysis of the

object of experience shows quite generally that this object *is not simple* but rather has to be understood as the result of a complex constitutive process. The single constitutive elements and their inter-relatedness (*symploca*) must within such an analysis be thought of as "earlier" in relation to the constituted object. The "Prior" has operational significance, to express the matter formally.

Yet what material significance must we accord to "Prior"? It has no temporal significance; the Kantian procedure of thinking is not aimed at a temporally prior object or at a temporally prior knowledge. The expression, "before all experience" designates a quality different from the empirical, a quality that Kant defines negatively as independence from data; it does not designate an empirical quality existing at a prior or primal point of time.

The "prior", of course, also does not carry any metaphysical meaning. It is not a matter of super-sensible entities as the metaphysical origin of the world of objects.

And also, finally, the "prior" cannot be understood purely within the context of a theory of objects, so that such a theory might be expected to be analogous to a theory of solid bodies in the sense of a "system of hypotheses".

If according to Kant certain constitutive elements are "prior" to the object of experience in the sense that *the elements of the logical genesis of the object* can, by a qualified method of thought, be identified, then this "prior" is logical in its nature, that is, it has to be thought.

The elements identified in elementary transcendental analysis are not to be understood as micro-objects. To use an analogy — neither does micro-physics deal with micro-objects; it deals with "particles". These again are not understood as the minutest parts of macrophysical objects; rather they exhibit another quality which is represented by different metaphors such as corpuscle or wave.

But *what*, then, is being thought in this qualified process of thought? Kant's answer, on principle, is this: What is being thought is a logical genesis in the form of the process of a synthesis. The object, or the character in general as objective, is set forth as a result of this constitutive process. However, the transcendental synthesis once again cannot be objectified as a micropsychological process; this would be a regression (or advance) into a knowledge of, as it were, microscopically small processes. In any case transcendental thinking would be outside its characteristic domain. The elementary doctrine provides a logical construct which is called *transcendental/logical* because it is not concerned with the linkage of concepts or sentences, but with the linkage of indefinite contents through concepts. In this preobjective synthesis the object is first generated for consciousness.

The preobjective synthesis and its elements are a task for thought and for thought alone.

Thus we take a first step in operationally defining the transcendental method in the most general terms: it is the method concerned with that priority of an action in the larger sense — of knowing, in this case — which can not be *known*, as can actual conditions, but which has to be *thought*. The transcendental method is not one by means of which we can know what cannot be known by other methods. Also it does not take the place of a theory of knowledge which might be classified as knowledge of knowledge so long as this were to follow certain laws, for example, rules of logic; rules of a theory of objective reality (*Gegenstandstheorie*); laws of psychology and sociology; and possibly also laws of essences (*Wesensgesetze*, a metaphysic of knowledge). It follows thus that transcendental synthesis is neither a potential (micro-)object for knowledge, nor is there an advance in the knowledge (of objects) by means of transcendental logic.

But what can be the good of thinking if it does not lead to knowledge? Should transcendental philosophy be merely a matter of an esoteric thought game? Such a question might easily be dodged by distinguishing between knowledge in a narrow sense (as knowledge of objects) and knowledge in the larger sense (as, perhaps, of principles or laws). We do not take this route in the present discourse. In accordance with Kant the notion of knowledge shall here be defined as knowledge of objects, including their possible conformity to laws; and the assertion shall be maintained that no objects are known in the transcendental method, not even objects of a higher order.

Should it prove true that the transcendental method does not lead to knowledge, and should our earlier suspicion as a consequence be confirmed that this method contributes nothing to the advancement of knowledge, then we might suspect quite a different reason for the displeasure with transcendental philosophy mentioned at the beginning. Science is measured by scientific progress, and scientific progress is the advance of knowledge. When, however, a method does not offer promise of advancing knowledge, no bright career can be predicted for it. Metaphysics has, after all, held out a prospect for the increase of knowledge even though its presumed results have proven to be dubious. When, then, a method is offered which from the very beginning anticipates no increase of knowledge at all, obviously the scientific community will reject such a method as irrelevant.

V

What good then, it will be asked, is a form of thought that does not

contribute to the progress of scientific knowledge? In order to come closer to an answer, let us throw into relief one characteristic trait of this method. In the transcendental method we are concerned with reflecting on the "prior" that is inherent within an activity of reason. Kant has structured this method in such a way that the activity of reason is seen as a consequent, and the "prior" is seen as its ground. The concept of "ground" is here to be taken in its strictest sense. It does not signify the higher or even the final cause concealed by a series of intermediate causes. It does signify that which is not a part of the series of causes but instead is itself the condition of the series of causes and which therefore can only be thought. The difference is expressed equally in the Kantian phrase "conditions of the possibility". That which either is possible, or renders possible something else, has to be thought. In colloquial speech we say that we can "figure it out". That is why this type of thinking may — though not perhaps in the Kantian sense, but surely in accordance with Schelling — also be termed "construction". It thus becomes clear that the thinking of a ground-and-consequent relationship or of a connection of conditions neither provides evidence concerning whether or not this action conceived as consequent actually exists, nor does it tell us what are its characteristics. I may think as I wish, we could say in a modification of the Kantian dictum, just as long as it is consistent.

VI

Let us come back to the question of what use there might be in such thinking of a ground and in constructing a foundation *a priori*, or what other import it might possess. As stated previously, the gain is not to be found in apprehending a new, true object, nor in apprehending the object in a new and true way. The first effect of this form of thought is that a difference is introduced into the activity of knowing — an activity of reason — in that knowing itself puts a conceptual distance between itself and its preobjective presuppositions. The second effect of this form of thought is that it constructs this difference logically as a relation of ground and consequent or of conditions and the conditioned. The third effect is that knowledge, thanks to the logically structured difference, can enter into relationship with itself and can assert itself as being thus substantiated. These three effects do not represent a gain in knowledge. Rather, the particular gain consists in human activity comprehending itself as rational.

The term "to comprehend" is herewith introduced. Comprehension is the coming-to-fruition of qualified thought which succeeds in the transcendental genesis of the activity of reason — be it acting,

feeling, knowledge or a specific mode of knowing — in a transcendental logic.

The distinction between knowing and comprehending is familiar from colloquial speech. Someone may say, even while clearly knowing a fact, "That cannot be", or even, "That cannot possibly be true". He knows the fact but cannot comprehend it; that is, he cannot think of it as being at all possible. It is not until he can identify a number of further facts as being connected with the previously incomprehensible event, and until he — or possibly a third person — is able to reconstruct this connection as a conditional one, that he can comprehend how the event was possible at all, even if its actual occurrence may remain forever incomprehensible. In colloquial speech of course we speak of real, not of transcendental, conditions — but this is nevertheless a valid analogy.

The experience of being able to comprehend or not to comprehend is not a trivial one. The person confronted with a fact which he cannot comprehend feels he is at its mercy and subjected to it. He cannot relate to it; he feels unfree. Incomprehension is bound up with the experience of unfreedom. But comprehension returns a person to the open horizon of possibility. The fact is placed at a distance, and the construction of a connection of conditions brings with it insight into possibility. The insight into possibility, however, relieves us of being at the mercy of the *factum brutum* by offering a variety of possibilities of conduct. Kierkegaard speaks of this in his *Sickness unto Death* when he describes a form of despair as a "lack of possibility". "[G]iven a possibility...the desperate man breaths once more, and revives again; for without possibility a man cannot, as it were, draw breath."¹ Comprehension as well as incomprehension has practical relevance. Comprehension is a mode of freedom.

The method of reconstructing and setting forth the conditions of the possibility of a situation or an object bears significance not only in the existential domain. It is employed quite generally and aims at empirical conditions in the sphere of empirical realities. Reflection on the conditions is here not subject to the fact of whether or not the thing, the possibility of which we are to comprehend, is given or not given or is possibly still unknown. Let us take the frequency of accidents at a certain traffic intersection as an example of the first case. Their causes, such as disregard of the right of way, high speed, or others ought to be distinguished from conditions on account of which such traffic offenses can cause accidents in the first place — conditions that often are to be sought in factors of road building and city planning. Another case would be one in which something is not yet actualized but its feasibility is to be examined, as for example

¹Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Sickness unto Death*, trans. with Intro. and notes by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 172.

building a house or a bridge under the given local conditions. The third case, finally, would be that of something not only not actualized but still absolutely unknown. In this case the procedure is set in motion by speculatively trying out and developing constructs — be it as stimulated by an operationally set goal, or freely and independently. The designers proceed, initially quite untroubled by the question as to whether something will ever exist which may be comprehended by this construct. Should the construct succeed, the result can be reduced to this short sentence: the matter is possible and thus fundamentally feasible. Whether or not it is in reality producible is another question — one which cannot be answered by a transcendental method but must be answered instead by an empirical-rational one. If nowadays the politics of the sciences frequently and programatically speaks of “research and development”, the meaning is [[nonetheless]] that the sciences are no longer exclusively preoccupied with the increase of knowledge in the sense of an older concept of science. Rather, practice in logic — that is, in the various branches of logic — has led to a situation in which thought can construct as possible something that only later becomes an object. The process by which an object is produced on the basis of a construct which “conforms to cognition” (*Erkenntnis*), not only in the transcendental but also in the technical sense, is called “development”. The mere conception and description of conditions under which an object might be actualized, separated from the knowledge proper of objects, is not all that uncommon in the sciences.

VII

But let us return to the case of transcendental-philosophical construction of the conditions of the possibility of rational_v knowledge and action as such. It is the task of the transcendental method to comprehend, not single facts of a life history but rather those fundamental facts by which a person proves himself to be endowed with reason. As we know, Kant identified these fundamental facts by means of rational psychology's theory of mental faculties. These facts, according to the Kantian theory of mental faculties, consist of man desiring and acting, knowing, and feeling. For Anselm of Canterbury — to mention a perhaps unexpected authority — the fundamental fact consisted in man believing in God — a fact to be comprehended, in his words, *sola ratione*. The logical conceptual construct he created to this end has, misleadingly, come down in the history of philosophy as an “ontological proof of God”. For Husserl the fundamental fact consisted in man pursuing science; he thus conceived of his transcendental logic as a “logic of absolute science”, that is, “the logic of transcendental-phenomenological philosophy”.² It is in

general the task of the transcendental method to account for the possibility of an activity of reason. Or more specifically — to use a familiar Kantian formulation — it is to present the conditions of the possibility as a ground-consequent relationship. For Kant, the subjects to be comprehended — namely, mathematics and empirical knowledge — were given; he saw it as his task to render them comprehensible. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Judgment* he set forth according to principles the conditions under which they are possible at all — and it is of little concern here that the Kantian manner of presentation is a matter of controversy. Simultaneously he demonstrated that metaphysics as knowledge of super-sensible objects cannot be made comprehensible. Metaphysics is not possible in the sense of an objective science, which is why according to Kant it should be suspended unless one could succeed in thinking it possible in an entirely new manner.

The significance of comprehending as a fruit of thought [[and]] as distinct from the knowledge of objects is, according to Kant, immediately and, as it were, tangibly identifiable. As one comprehends that metaphysics as scientific knowledge of super-sensible objects is not possible, and comprehends at the same time why mathematics and the natural sciences are possible as nomological sciences, one initially sees the meaning of comprehending as consisting in a critical orientation of inherently disoriented scientific knowledge, as regards its own perimeter and limits. This orientation to the limits of objective knowledge is of special significance to Kant because of the interest of reason in morality. *Comprehending* knowledge as a fruit of thinking creates an opening for freedom. It is not merely knowledge that is grasped as possible, but “faith” as well. What is meant here is not religious faith: the task of comprehending Christian faith and revelation as possible is taken up by Fichte in his first work *Critique of all revelation*. Kant refers rather to rational_y faith, that is, to the consciousness of freedom. Just as in the *Critique of Pure Reason* knowledge is comprehended, so is the moral will in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. It is comprehended as autonomy, and indeed as that will whose first and only commandment it is to determine itself through pure reason. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, morality is *comprehended* in such a manner that freedom is thought to be its unconditioned condition. This entails not only ascribing freedom to man as a quality of his will, but also that, in comprehending his morality as founded on freedom, he posits himself as free. The meaning of the critical comprehension of practical reason consists in the self-affirmation of freedom as freedom.

² *Formale und transzendente Logik* (1929), 296.

VIII

It was Fichte who expanded and radicalized the task of transcendental philosophy beyond a transcendental critique of the faculty of reason toward a doctrine of transcendental freedom. Fichte did not intend merely a critical legitimation and limitation of the knowledge of objects nor even a critical definition of what constitutes the moral character of an action. He aimed toward a comprehension of all cognition (*Wissen*)^w — theoretical as well as practical. Even though he speaks of a “science of cognition”, his “science of knowledge” cannot be understood as a higher or highest type of knowledge beyond all finite knowledge, but rather as a comprehending of all cognition, including a highest cognition, which may possibly be regarded as idea. The early basic formula for this type of comprehension was, as we know, that a fact becomes comprehensible if and only if it is traced back to an “action” (“*Tathandlung*”), and when the genesis of the fact can be described from the perspective of the transcendental action (*Tathandlung*). Fichte thinks of transcendental freedom as the unconditional founding element of all cognition or action. This means that every fact, including every fact of nature, possesses a transcendental moral relevance, and that a being (*ein Sein*) is comprehended only when the ought (*das Sollen*) which it presupposes has been considered — a concept Hegel criticized as resting upon the “principle of non-identity” (I, 225).

In transcendental idealism nature, or whatever can be classed with the “system of experience”, is not primarily comprehended as an object but rather as the system of experience for a finite rational_v being. The rational_v being, however, is comprehended in principle as moral. “Primarily” in this context means that a sequence is conceived within which the *posterius* becomes perceivable and comprehensible by virtue of its *priora*. The concept of transcendental freedom as an unconditioned prior thus signifies the following: inasmuch as man asserts himself as a moral reasonable being and attributes responsibility to himself and others not merely in the pragmatic but also in the moral sense, he has posited himself as freedom — inevitably so, and in a manner not to be overtaken by dialectic. Freedom is the unconditioned transcendental prior which must be presupposed as the unconditional in all other conditions of human knowledge and acting if knowledge and actions are to be considered rational_v. The evidence of the prior lies in its being posited as unconditional. The first evidence is an evidence of transcendental action. Freedom in the transcendental sense is thus not proven; also it cannot be known; in transcendental philosophy, it is being *thought* as

the unconditioned conditioning element of moral self-affirmation.

Fichte thus expands the already firmly established Kantian concept of the transcendental into the concept central to all science and philosophy, that of the genesis of recognition and action from unconditioned freedom. His transcendentalism makes a claim which, compared with that made by Kant for his transcendental-*critical* method, is all-encompassing; he wishes to provide a transcendental foundation not merely for the form of true knowledge but for the contents of true knowledge and of moral action as well. The claim of having provided a transcendental foundation, however, is not only all-encompassing but also unconditioned. Fichte is guided by the interest of reason to think the transcendental conditions themselves (that is, pure perception and pure concept in the Kantian sense) as themselves conditioned — conditioned by an unconditioned element. To this extent Fichte's philosophy has been epoch-making in the modern philosophy of freedom.

Yet Fichte's philosophy presents problems due to a methodological overload of the transcendental method. Wherever in the process of providing a transcendental foundation a fact is regarded as a consequent and is traced back to its ground, the method conversely appears in such a way that the fact as consequent may now be deduced from that ground. Transcendental reduction becomes deduction when its direction is reversed. This reversal to deduction, however, contains an error. It does not take into consideration the difference between thinking and knowing. The transcendental method as a process of thinking the ground cannot be reversed into a method of deductive knowledge. For the concept of the unconditioned ground is a concept of freedom; this, however, is not a concept for cognition (*Wissen*) from which a particular knowledge might be deduced. If a political goal — say, equality under the law — cannot be comprehended unless man is thought of as free, this is not to say that what equality under the law means can be known by deduction from the concept of freedom. To discover what constitutes equality under the law requires complex strategies in practical philosophy as well as in jurisprudence and the social sciences. Neither can moral norms be simply deduced from a transcendental unconditioned element. The concept of the unconditioned "ought" reveals nothing material. Fichte's deductive rigorism must not be charged to the transcendental method but rather to its unauthorized reversal into deduction. What is legitimate as a method of comprehending becomes illegitimate when it is perverted into a method of supposedly rigorous knowledge. The legitimacy as well as the fertility of the transcendental method rest upon our continued differentiation between the two interests of reason, that is, knowledge and comprehension.

It was Schelling who once again broadened the claim of transcen-

dental philosophy but who, as later became clear, came thereby to exaggerate it. According to Schelling, transcendental philosophy is supposed wholly to represent the transcendental ground of nature, consciousness, and mind as the system of an absolute productivity. While Fichte, in a reductive and deductive mode, respectively, was thinking the transcendental conditions and the unconditionally conditioning element of human knowledge and action, so that by virtue of this thinking, human action actualized the character of freedom, Schelling placed the transcendental method under the claim of a single universal system. This was the system of the absolute qua absolute. Schelling actualized the transcendental method as "construction", that is, as a rational-conceptual representation of an unconditioned productivity which becomes manifest as absolute identity in a process of self-differentiation and self-identification. To be sure, the transcendental conditions of nature and consciousness were, at least in excerpted form, set forth in this transcendental construction — but ultimately what mattered was not these conditions but rather the "transcendental" history of the absolute. It is known that Schelling was unable to carry out this project. He succeeded in presenting only parts of the system. The later attempt to carry out the transcendental method as a transcendental construction of history, within which the past, present, and future of the supreme Being were to be presented by a questionable blend of logic and narration, also produced only fragments, as revealed by writings and lectures on the *Ages of the World*.^v Schelling's philosophy, and the decision carried out in his late philosophy to associate transcendental philosophy as a negative philosophy with a positive philosophy of actually occurring history, demonstrate in quite another manner than did the Kantian critique and Fichte's claim to deductive knowledge that the transcendental method does not possess the capacity to accomplish everything that is of legitimate interest to reason.

Hegel had initially seen himself united with Schelling in the view that philosophy needed to be placed within the claim of a System of the Absolute, and that it was the task of philosophy to establish the identity of identity and non-identity as an absolute process. Yet Hegel avoids the concept "transcendental", recognizing correctly that a philosophy of transcendental grounding never is — nor even can be — a system of absolute knowledge. Hegel's philosophy was in fact driving at precisely an abrogation (*Aufhebung*) of the difference between fact and ground, of knowledge and thinking, cognition and comprehension. Hegel dismisses, or rather neutralizes, the concept of the transcendental, as he recognizes that the transcendental method, while it may be a method of finite rational_v being, cannot be *the* method of absolute reason. Thus he becomes the first to render

"transcendental" a historical concept, a concept he uses critically to designate mainly the philosophies of Kant and Schelling. Otherwise he gives the word an unimportant role in his own terminology. As Hegel phrased it, what Kant called transcendental logic corresponded to that part of his, Hegel's, *Science of Logic* that he called "objective logic".³ Thus the doctrine of being (*Sein*) and of essence (*Wesen*) in the Hegelian system (in *Science of Logic*, Books I and II) has taken the place of transcendental philosophy; it deals with the "genesis" of the *Begriff* (philosophical concept that is also fully actual) out of *Sein* and of essence (*Wesen*). With this the scope of the enquiry Kant had treated in transcendental logic has become integrated as a moment of the science of logic — a moment that now can no longer meaningfully be termed transcendental, since the tendency to abrogate (*aufheben*) the distinction between knowing, thinking, and comprehending in absolute knowledge negates transcendentality.

IX

What may we conclude from this brief outline of the transcendental method? We have here a specific procedure of thought by means of which we can identify and reconstruct those *a priori* presuppositions that may be thought of as forming the basis of rational, human acting and knowing. Among the various forms of human acting and knowing, the sciences have, in a special way, attracted the attention of transcendental philosophers. For Kant, these sciences were mathematics, the natural sciences, and metaphysics; for neo-Kantians, the natural sciences and the humanities; for Husserl the focal point was mathematics; today the linguistic, social, and historical sciences are the ones that more strongly stimulate transcendental inquiry. Furthermore, the world we live in (*die Lebenswelt*), religion and faith, artistic activity and its products — all these did and still do present the challenge of comprehending their transcendental presuppositions.

These transcendental presuppositions are to be distinguished from historical presuppositions. Human actions rest upon immensely numerous and heterogeneous natural and historical presuppositions.⁴ We have the particular scientific disciplines of history, sociology, psychology and others that serve to identify and study these. The transcendental presuppositions, however, in contradistinction to na-

³ *Wissenschaft der Logik*, ed. by friends, III, 52. Compare the letter to I. Niethammer of 23. Oct., 1812, ed. XVII. 339.

⁴ Compare W. Oelmüller, "Zur Rekonstruktion unserer historisch vorgegebenen Handlungsbedingungen", in *Wozu noch Geschichte? Kritische Information*, ed. by W. Oelmüller (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977), 267-309. By the same author, see *Transzendentalphilosophische Normenbegründungen*, ed. by W. Oelmüller (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1978), 50-89.

tural and historical ones, do not lend themselves to the methods of objectification used in the particular sciences. This holds true to a certain extent for those universal presuppositions which the philosophy of language posits as pragmatically realized or realizable. The claims of *a priori* validity of discourse in J. Habermas and K.-O. Apel, for instance, are identified as such and quasi-empirically reconstructed in a quasi-transcendental pragmatic philosophy of language. This method, seeking as it does a compromise between empirical and *a priori*,⁵ differs from the transcendental method in the strict sense of the term primarily in that the latter is guided in its identification, reconstruction, and setting forth of transcendental conditions by the idea of an unconditioned element. Not only is it established that the conditions are thought necessarily, but they are themselves in turn thought as grounded in an unconditioned element. Transcendental philosophy thus does not proceed in such a way that it proves, inductively as it were, an aggregate of four or six *conditiones sine quibus non*, but rather it has as its goal a logic of the activity of reason. The conditions of the possibility of rational_v knowledge would thus have to be traced back to the concept of truth, and the conditions of the possibility of rational_v communication of the concept of freedom as a concept of the unconditioned. This procedure is called forth by the fact that man's interest as a rational_v being cannot be satisfied merely by engaging in rational_v activity, but, he has to be able, in addition, to affirm that his activity is grounded in reason. The quality of being rational_v, however, is not fully grounded until it follows the principle of going back to an unconditioned element. For "the need of reason", to express it in Kantian terms, "to rise from the conditioned to the unconditioned also affects the concepts themselves". Should it fail to do so, it would find itself inherently challenged to inquire and to think further. "Reason, however, demands to think the unconditioned and with it the totality of all conditions; otherwise, it would not cease its inquiry, as if no answers had as yet been found."⁶

The inquiry into transcendental conditions of human action is thus a rational_v one. The answering of such inquiry through a grounding construct does not, to be sure, lead to metaphysical insights but rather to the comprehending of actions as rational_v.

Such comprehending, as Fichte has shown, is itself an unconditioned act or an act of freedom. It does not initially serve in the formulation of theories of knowledge or of action; instead it places

⁵ Compare my, "Empirie und Apriori. Zum Verhältnis von Transzendentalphilosophie und Sprachpragmatik", in *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, Heft 14 (1978), 57-75.

⁶ *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik seit Leibniz und Wolff*, Beilage II und III, Cassirer ed. VIII, 319, 314.

knowledge and action at a distance and thus permits us to enter into relation with both.

X

Progress in objective knowledge and rational formulation of theories carries with it a progress of necessities; for an objectivity understood to possess general validity is posited as being necessary. Necessities are raised to a higher power by an increase in the capacity for action, which is especially true where the capacity for action extends over and dominates a progressively expanding field of action by means of technologies. In the latter case necessities turn into constraints (*Zwänge*). A progress of rationality is proportionate to progress of a constraint, since a rational theory leaves no alternative except it be falsified by another theory; this is to say that in practice one compulsion replaces another. Certainly there can be an anarchical breaking-away from the system of compelling forces (*Zwänge*) — yet such escapes do not result in freedom; they merely replace objective compelling forces with subjective violence. Nor will any attempt to arrest the progress of knowledge and the progress of technology promise freedom, since the degree of unfreedom does not hinge upon the slowness or speed of progress but rather is determined by a lack of distance or by a want of concepts. Reason gains distance and concepts in the realm of science by means of thinking.

In thinking that comprehends, reason places itself in relation to its own activities as knowing or acting — as science, technology, politics and so forth — and by so doing gains a freedom even with respect to the laws to which it is subject. Certainly man is subject to natural law and social constraint; certainly also he is bound by ethical norms. In the act of a transcendental creation of distance from, and a rendering-transparent of, necessities of reason, man as a rational_v being possesses freedom with respect to the natural laws to which he is subject, with respect to the ever present organization of his life and circumstances (*seiner Lebenswelt*), and with respect to the ethical norms that bind him. The transcendental logic of the actions of reason is the theoretical representation of transcendental freedom. It permits reason to remain self-identical in these its activities even while externalizing (*bei aller Entäusserung*) into concrete action, and opens the possibility of rational_v innovation.

Thinking, when compared with the mighty progress of the sciences and technologies, is weak — so weak that it is not taken into consideration. Yet the “and” in the combination of knowing and thinking is a positive import. Thinking is not an alternative to knowing; it is rather its potentiation. We know; and we ought to think know-

ledge. Thinking opens up a way to secure for man that freedom of knowing and action of which he is deprived if he merely knows and acts accordingly, even with all his rationality. Withal, it is not thinking itself that is the goal, but rather the transparency of rationality which arises with thinking — the openness of reason; that “place” that Kant, through his transcendental critique, was able to create for the consciousness of freedom.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Vincent McCarthy provided advisement in connection with the final editing of this translation (The Coordinator).

ⁱ In the interest of preserving Kant's distinction between *Vernunft* and the less inclusive *Verstand* we have reserved the terms “reason” and “reasonable” to render “*Vernunft*” or “*vernünftig*” throughout. A related consideration is that, in response to the author's wish to preserve the distinction between the German “*rational*” and “*vernünftig*” in the translation, we have throughout rendered these terms by “rational” and “rational_v”, respectively.

ⁱⁱ Here and throughout, to preserve the distinction between “*Gegenstand*” and “*Objekt*” in the German, the former has been rendered “object” and the latter “object for a subject”.

ⁱⁱⁱ Here and following, somewhat in opposition to the current trend in Kant translations, we have with two necessary exceptions rendered “*Erkenntnis*” either as “knowledge” or “knowing”, rather than as “cognition”. This has been found necessary by virtue of certain themes treated in §§Vff, leading up to the author's relating of knowledge to comprehension and to thinking in the concluding §§VIIIff.

One of the exceptions is indicated near the end of §VI where, in order to make the intention of the author clear, it has seemed preferable to render the term “cognition”. The other is within the quotation from Kant to which footnote 6 is appended, where it has been rendered “think”.

^{iv} Where the reference is to Fichte, “*Wissen*” will be rendered “cognition”, which is intended to be neutral with respect to the Kantian distinction between thinking and knowledge.

^v *Welterdrücke und Weltaltermvorlesungen.*

REMARKS ON THE CONCEPT OF CAUSE*

Erhard Scheibe

Translated by David J. Marshall jr.

In the year 1949 Josef König published an extensive study entitled "Bemerkungen über den Begriff der Ursache" (Remarks on the Concept of Cause).¹ Addressed directly to Hume's and Kant's treatment of the question, taking little stock of subsequent — especially the most recent — developments, and having, for this or for some other reason, been passed over in silence by the pertinent literature since 1949, König's study may be said to occupy an isolated position among the more recent discussions of questions pertaining to the area of causality. Those who ignored that study did it — or rather, they did its author — a grave injustice that wants redress. I do not propose to take the present opportunity to make up for this entirely, but only to select a single thought, albeit a central one, from König's profoundly complex and widely ramified argumentations, and to make it useful for my own purposes. In restating this one idea, I have found it advantageous for my own intentions, while compatible — I believe — with König's, to take certain liberties, occasionally to follow an alternate sequence, or perhaps even to place the accents somewhat differently.

König arrives at his idea by way of a two-fold criticism: It is

* Translated from "Bemerkungen über den Begriff der Ursache", in *Vom Geist der Naturwissenschaft* (Zürich: Rhein Verlag, 1969), pp. 105-34.

In this paper the author attempts to show how the traditional concept of a causal law as it originated with Hume has developed into two quite different concepts, one scientific, the other metascientific. The prototype of the former is the concept of a deterministic law in classical physics, whereas the latter, the metascientific concept, points to a certain kind of explanation of one physical law by another. In this kind of explanation we come to understand why the first law failed to explain a certain phenomenon just as in everyday life the identification of a cause makes us understand why something happened that was a departure from the normal, reasonably expected course of events.

¹ In *Das Problem der Gesetzlichkeit*, ed. by Joachim Jurgius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften in Hamburg (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1949), vol. I, pp. 25-120. (Reprinted in: *Josef König. Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Ed. by G. Patzig (Freiburg: Alber, 1978), 122-255.

directed not only against a very striking — and for that reason well known — *result* of the analysis to which Hume subjected the concept of cause, but against a much less striking *presupposition* as well, which not only Hume, but also Kant, allowed to suffuse, as it were, his reflections on the concept. Hume's result, to which reference is made, is unfolded in a chain of assertions which, as mentioned, are well known: that we, as humans, have no *a priori* insight into a conjunction between *A* and a (numerically distinct) *B* which, when we assert *A* to be the cause of *B*, we allege to be necessary and at the same time objective; that we depend rather on experience alone for the ascertainment of a causal connection; that the experience in question consists in the repeated perception that something of the nature of *B* follows temporally upon something of the nature of *A*; and consequently that not only our knowledge of one causal connection or another but the very concept of causality itself arises from this type of experience alone. The tacit presupposition, however, which Hume and, following him, Kant make with respect to the concept of cause is that whatever stands in a causal relation to something, and which we accordingly call its cause, is also, that is, apart from its designation as cause, something like an object or an event, in any case something that can be localized in space and time.

Against Hume's doctrine and the prejudice common to Hume and Kant, both of which have been recalled, König proposes his fundamental thesis, which he formulates as follows:

The so-called cause is simply not a thing or a being; it is not something given at a certain place and time, but a certain typical thought connection with the help of which man re-establishes a fundamental intellectual contact with his environment, which, originally given, has been broken by an *unexpected* event.²

Let us concentrate on the part of this thesis — that is, the second part — with which König opposes Hume. In a different context we read the following:

Hume teaches that the notion of something like a cause forms in us because and insofar as we experience that like always follows upon like. On this basis, the more a particular observation presents a sequence of like upon like, the more we should expect our awareness of causation to become lively and emphatically clear. Quite the contrary, it appears obvious to me that things are actually the other way around. We ask 'Why?' precisely when what occurs is different from what we expected, precisely, therefore, when what we observe, contrary to a tacit expectation, is not a sequence of like upon like.³

Let us determine, first of all, what constitutes the peculiarity of an

² Ibid., p. 29.

³ Ibid., p. 28.

approach to an explanation of the concept of causality that begins with such a remark. Obviously it consists in the fact that (1) to answer the question as to the nature of cause, the author asks what the *typical situation* is, in which the knowledge of a cause is sought, in which the need to inquire after a cause arises, or in which the question as to the "Why?" of a thing simply comes, as if of its own accord. This typical situation is then (2) identified as one in which an occurrence is experienced, not merely insofar as something has occurred as it did, but insofar as something, in occurring the way it did, occurred *differently* from what was to be expected. But the really decisive step in the determination of the concept of cause is (3) this, that the concept incorporates *within itself* the conceptual description of the situation indicated. And this is accomplished in the only way possible for such an approach, by means of a definition of the concept of *effect*.⁴ For what is given in the situation typical for the inquiry after a cause is precisely the effect of the cause sought. As a consequence of (2) that which is given does not consist in the fact that something has occurred in such and such a way, but rather — in a brief, if somewhat misleading manner of speaking — that it occurred in this, but not in that way. Only when *both* of these components are united can the given be termed an effect, and, viewed in this way, such an effect is not at all a change in the ordinary sense, that is, a change occurring in time. It is not, for example, a temporal change in the place or in the velocity of a body moving in space; it does not consist in the fact that a body is now here and later somewhere else. Rather, when it is said in reference to an effect, that something, occurring the way it did, occurred differently from what was to be expected, the word 'differently' refers to the distinction between an entire temporal process (which actually took place) and a different entire temporal process (which though possible and even expected, did not actually take place); hence it refers to something which obviously cannot itself be understood as having taken place in time.

On this basis it no longer appears strange — and herewith we are concerned with the other, that is, the first, part of König's thesis, directed against the prejudice, common to Hume and Kant, that a cause has the character of an event — that the notion 'cause' also refers, not to an object, or an event, or to anything at all that is found in space and time, but rather to the above cited "typical thought connection", for the further characterization of which I should once again like to let König himself have the word. In view of the danger that König views as having befallen Hume and Kant — the

⁴ Ibid., pp. 73ff.

danger, that is, of taking the notion of causality as an extensional concept referring to spatio-temporal objects — he suggests to the reader

that he keep himself from the very beginning wide open to the natural, close at hand, and yet very essential view that the cause of a thing has been indicated when the spontaneous question “Why?” has been satisfactorily answered. Hence the concept of cause is first and foremost the concept of a satisfactory answer to the question “Why?”. The so-called cause is... what makes us understand why.... It is the “That’s why” answering the “Why?”⁵

The characterization of cause given earlier as a typical thought connection, “with the help of which man re-establishes a fundamental intellectual contact with his environment, which, originally given, has been broken by an unexpected event”, finds resonance in this new characterization only insofar as the question “Why?”, with which we seek a cause, is called *spontaneous* and is clearly presented as spontaneously arising precisely from what is wrong in the situation described. Concerning the thought connection itself, however, as which the cause is identified, we now learn that it must make us really *understand* something, so that a cause is in every case an *explanation*.

At this point we get a clearer view of König establishing his central thesis, that

the radical separation of the logical relation of premise to consequence from the allegedly real, translogical relation of cause to effect, which came to be accepted largely in the period following Leibniz, was not a step forward and essentially must come to be rejected.⁶

The subsequent development of König’s presentations shows that his answer to the question as to the nature of cause turns out not to be unlike the deductive-nomological model that at about the same time Hempel and Oppenheim proposed as their answer to the direct question (that is, to the question that does not go by way of the concept of cause) as to the nature of *scientific explanation*.⁷ I speak of no more than a certain similarity because I wish to designate the one point in which it consists. Just as it is important for Hempel and Oppenheim, among others, to exhibit in an explanation that which is explained as a *logical consequence* of that which does the explaining, so it is essential to König to identify the necessity of a causal connection as a *logical necessity* and on precisely this basis as some-

⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

⁷ C. G. Hempel and P. Oppenheim, “Studies in the Logic of Explanation”, in *philosophy of Science*, 15 (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1948), pp. 135-75.

thing intelligible. If, for example, to his question why this ball, which has just been at rest, is now in motion, someone is given the answer, because it was pushed, this answer will be a satisfactory one, that is, one that enables him to understand what he previously could not, only providing he is in possession of the general empirical principle that a ball which had been at rest and has been given a push is a ball in motion. Hence the only genuinely satisfactory answer is one which includes, besides the singular proposition indicating the cause in the commonly received sense, a general empirical principle as well, and from which, since it contains both, it is possible to deduce logically the proposition describing the situation that had provoked the question. König's treatment of this subject cannot be reduced to a formal model, as can Hempel's and Oppenheim's. Further, he does not deal with the concept of explanation, but of cause; nor, as a consequence, does he deal with the more modest assertion that an explanation is a satisfactory answer to a question asking "Why?", but with the assertion that a cause is such an answer. Aside from all of this, however, the point with which I, certainly, am most deeply concerned — although König perhaps is not — is one in which his reflections differ essentially from those of Hempel and Oppenheim. The particular situation in which or as a result of which the question "Why?" is asked — not merely in a devil-may-care manner but for a reason — and which provides, as it were, the fertile ground without which no understanding can thrive, is something that Hempel, in the subsequent development of his theory of scientific explanation,⁸ is concerned to *separate*, as a purely pragmatic aspect, from the explanation itself. König's idea, however, that the indicated characterization of the typical situation in which we are led to ask "Why?" ought to be incorporated either in the concept of explanation or even — as König himself holds — in that of the cause, strikes me as a very happy one indeed.

Before I proceed on the basis of these remarks of König to questions pertaining to physics, it will be well to examine more closely the peculiar approach he takes to the clarification of the concept of cause — the bringing to consciousness and the correct evaluation of the particular situation in which the question of a cause arises spontaneously. For this purpose I should like to draw attention to a writing published ten years later by Hart and Honoré entitled "Causation in the Law".⁹ As the title indicates, the purpose of these authors is to examine the concept of cause as it relates to the science of

⁸ C. G. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation* (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 425ff.

⁹ H. L. Hart and A. M. Honoré, *Causation in the Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

jurisprudence, or even more to the actual practice of the courts. Fundamentally their discussion is based on a criticism of the pertinent views of Hume; they outline the improvements due to J. S. Mill, but criticize them also. The discussion attaches a good deal of importance to the question of the criteria we use when, out of a large number of conditions necessary for the occurrence of an event, we select, as we always do, a single one which we treat as the cause, downgrading the others to the level of mere concomitant circumstances. The answer given by Hart and Honoré to this question is centered around the notion that we always make causal judgments within a context that defines more or less clearly which circumstances are to be viewed as normal and which as abnormal. What is called "ordinary life" is, of course, the broadest context that can occur. On this context Hart and Honoré say the following:

In ordinary life the particular causal question is most often inspired by the wish for an explanation of a particular contingency the occurrence of which is puzzling because it is a departure from the normal, ordinary, and reasonably expected course of events: some accident, catastrophe, disaster or other deviation from the usual course of events.¹⁰

Obviously this is the very same emphasis as is placed by König on the peculiar individual situation in which something occurs differently from what a given context would have led us to expect. And even though Hart and Honoré do not draw the same conceptually rigorous consequences as König, yet it is no less important to them to differentiate their theory from that of Hume and Mill by indicating the context in which the notion of cause finds its application.

The notion that a cause is essentially something which interferes with the course of events which would normally take place is central to the common sense concept of cause, and at least as essential as the notion of invariable or constant sequence so much stressed by Mill and Hume.¹¹

But in pursuing their more proximate goal, the issue of how to single out a cause from merely circumstantial conditions, Hart and Honoré are now in a position to place these secondary conditions, which are not identified as causal, precisely in the kind of context the absence of which makes it meaningless to speak of causality in the first place. Thus, for example, the oxygen in the air and the presence of adequately desiccated combustible material are conditions apart from which a house cannot burn down. Still they cannot be identified as the cause of the conflagration since they are, or can be, present whether a fire breaks out or not. Hence they do not constitute the characteristic difference that gives rise to the kind of situation in which

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 27.

something develops differently from the way it would under normal circumstances.

Since my present concern, which I have already indicated but which can emerge clearly only after gradual preparation, is directed to a proposal which, if not opposed to, is yet parallel to the explanation model of Hempel and Oppenheim — a proposal oriented to a situation in which an explanation becomes actually urgent and imperative only as a result of an occurrence differing from the one anticipated — I shall again refer to the text of a recent analysis given by Hart and Honoré. Considering the case of a man who was shot by another, the authors, who, here as above, are concerned to differentiate a cause from concomitant circumstances, argue as follows:

Here we shall treat the shooting, not the later deprivation of his blood-cells of oxygen, as the *explanation* and the *cause* of his death, although it is perfectly true that we could *predict* the man's death from knowledge of the earlier part of the process.¹²

Here we find the observation that the cause, insofar as it is to *explain* the present case, is not to be sought in those conditions which would make it possible to *predict* the course of events with the greatest possible certainty. Hence there emerges a kind of contest between a popular and a more scientific way of envisaging things; in fact, in a preliminary way Hart and Honoré justify the identification of the cause in the present case as follows:

One...important motive for rejecting the later conditions as the causal explanation in such common sense inquiries is the fact that in such cases we are not looking for the cause of "death", but for the cause of death *under circumstances which call for an explanation*. We want to know why Smith died when he did; we do not want to be told what is always the case whenever death occurs. The former is typical of the common sense interest in causal questions ('Why did this happen when normally it would not?'), the second is typical of the experimental sciences ('What are the general conditions of death?')...¹³

Opposing the cause of "death" to the cause of death under circumstances that call for an explanation, and drawing a parallel opposition between the scientific and common sense interest in the causal question, this passage suggests that in science, if the word 'explanation' is taken in a very fundamental sense, actually nothing is explained — because the very impetus leading to scientific inquiry is not the requirement for explanation *in this sense*. That this is the view of Hart and Honoré is revealed by a second justification of the identification of the cause with a very early, but not with a later, part of the process under consideration.

¹² Ibid., p. 36 (my italics).

¹³ Ibid., p. 37.

These later phases come to light only after we have identified through common experience abnormal occurrences...of certain broadly described kinds ("shooting", "blows", etc.) which bring about disturbances of the normal course of things....To cite these later phases of the process as the cause would be pointless in any explanatory inquiry for we know of them only as the usual or necessary accompaniments of the abnormal occurrence..., which has been already recognized as "making the difference" between the normal course of events and what has in fact occurred, and so as explaining the latter. The details of the process have in themselves no explanatory force.¹⁴

It has already been mentioned that such a use of the notion of explanation seems to indicate that in the physical sciences, which are concerned with the questions of detail, things are explained, if at all, only in a quite different sense, and that what happens when – as in the case of Hempel and Oppenheim – this model, in which the procedure typifying the physical sciences has been captured, comes under the rubric of 'explanatory model' is at the least extremely odd, even if it is specified that 'explanatory' is meant here only in a scientific sense. Indeed one must wonder whether the description of what occurs in the sciences does not itself require a notion of explanation derived as a legitimate descendant from the one which, characterized here in a preliminary fashion on the basis of considerations taken from König and from Hart and Honoré, stems from the everyday concept of cause.

This, as ought to be openly admitted from the start, is a delicate and a difficult question. To answer it, it may be appropriate to realize first of all with the greatest possible clarity something that may seem to point in exactly the *opposite direction*: in a certain sense, the evolution of physics has tended towards the *elimination of every causal conceptuality* in the ordinary sense of the word. In view of the current confusion of ideas in the area of causal concepts, for which the success of quantum theory was not least responsible, it is not only appropriate, but necessary, to encumber this clarification further with a kind of guerilla war, even though – measured by the goal for which we are striving – the battle must be won, so to speak, with our backs to the enemy. Of the partisans that must be driven from their hide-outs, some are dug in behind what may be called the popular knowledge of what has taken place and what is still going on in physics, and some will be found behind what has been called "the spare-time philosophical works of scientists". What is going on in these circles is in part an innocent plea, and in part an all-out fight for the rather unsophisticated opinion that physics is concerned with causality. Let us for the moment take stock only of the popular knowledge of physics. It teaches us that physics is concerned to

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

establish laws of nature that may just as well be called causal laws. Furthermore, the popular mind is sufficiently enlightened on the subject of the so-called principle of causality to understand it as the assertion that nature is governed by causality and every event has a cause. It has, no doubt, gotten abroad that this principle of causality has begun to totter in the more recent physics. But even this circumstance seems to indicate that it is still not completely out of place to take the view that the conceptualizations of physics are somehow — if only at a very general level and in some cases even in a negative sense — tied to that of causality. Now, it is entirely within the scope of the present study to view the problem of causality in physics as not clearly settled. The trouble is that the discussions I have in mind, for the sake of which guerilla operations must be carried out, are lacking in those distinctions which, in view of the developed state of physics and of the philosophical tradition surrounding the problem of causality, must be made if the question is to be in any way advanced. These circumstances seem to indicate that we call to mind the above mentioned tendency of physics to develop in the direction of an elimination of the notion of causality. In this connection I shall invoke authors who have grasped the situation with the greatest imaginable clarity, and have expressed themselves as unmistakably as possible.

Unlike the popular mind, the scientific world of today should no longer be surprised to learn that the attempt to assign a legitimate place in physics to the concept of cause — even if it is taken in a completely immanent sense — is not without difficulty. For example, it ought to be known that even in his day Mach regarded the notions of cause and effect as unsuited to the genuinely scientific exploration of natural phenomena and attempted to have it completely superseded by that of *functional dependence*. It is perhaps less known, though in the present context significant, that when he comes to discuss questions pertaining to causality Mach is capable of making remarks similar to those excerpted from the analysis of König. The following is from his “Prinzipien der Wärmelehre” (Principles of the Theory of Heat).

In general we feel the need to inquire after causes only when an (unusual) change has occurred, because on the one hand only such a case draws our attention and gives rise to questions, and on the other only the occurrence of different cases (changes) lends meaning to the question as to what conditions determine the one or the other.¹⁵

I think it is important to take a moment to examine this argument a bit, and perhaps also to rectify it, because something can be learned

¹⁵ E. Mach, *Prinzipien der Wärmelehre* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1896), p. 340.

from it that goes beyond the analysis carried out from a somewhat different perspective by König. Mach claims that in general we feel the need to inquire after causes only when an unusual change has occurred; to support this claim he gives two reasons: Obviously the first is connected with what is unusual, taken — as is made clear by a further quote given immediately below — in the sense of what is unexpected in a change and is alone capable of giving rise to the need. This reason may in fact be viewed as indicating the grounds for our *need* to inquire after causes, the grounds, it may be said, for what Hempel refers to as the pragmatic part of that situation in which humans customarily inquire after causes.¹⁶ Mach's second reason is not at all so much a reason for the need under discussion except, perhaps, in the weakened sense that humans in general should not have the need to ask meaningless questions. The assertion that only the occurrence of *different* cases lends *meaning* to the question of what conditions determined the one or the other supplies therefore a reason, not for the fact that the need to inquire after causes is present when it is, but for the circumstances under which alone such an inquiry becomes meaningful. And for this is adduced, not, as in the other case, what is unexpected in a change, but precisely and exclusively the bare fact that a change — or rather a difference — is present. Hence the second reason points, not to a pragmatic, but to a *semantic* aspect of the kind of situation in which a cause is sought.

In "Erkenntnis und Irrtum" (Knowledge and Error) Mach returns to the theme of the passage taken above from his "Prinzipien der Wärmelehre".

If everything were to proceed on a completely regular basis without the slightest disturbance, just as the night follows the day, we would adapt to the sequence of events without ever thinking. Only a departure from the rule or the absence of a rule constrains us to ask why these events occur one time, those another

Not much further we read the following:

Once the presupposition of the constant conjunction of the elements has become embedded in our thought, we seek at once the cause of every change that occurs unexpectedly and for the first time.... Every change appears as a disturbance of the previous stability, as a dissolution of what formerly held together. It undoes the accustomed sequence... and impells us to seek another, to cast about for a cause.¹⁷

In terms of the distinction made just above, the aspect dominating these lines is clearly the pragmatic one; even so, in reading them one

¹⁶ Refer to Hempel, loc. cit.

¹⁷ E. Mach, *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1920), p. 277.

gets the feeling that he is watching someone touch, as it were, the very nerve of the problem of causality. The inference seems to lie within our grasp: The customary, regular and undisturbed course of events — or, on a higher conceptual level, the regular or lawlike connection hypothesized within the framework of a physical theory — is precisely not that for the description of which the concepts of cause and effect can, or even must, serve. Rather it is the case that such a course of events and such a connection must be *presupposed* in connection with a disruptive phenomenon, and this not merely to make inquiry after causes intelligible but also as a condition of the cause being meaningfully identified. When Mach speaks of cause in the last sentence of the above quoted passage, he refers to what, in a particular case, caused a new connection, and not the customary one, to take shape. There is no visible way for the identification of such a cause to proceed without making reference to *both* connections. Furthermore it would have seemed but one step away to produce these very considerations as the reason for rejecting the use of causal notions in physics, to say that the theories of physics are constructed in such a way as to eliminate the element of surprise because they involve the formulation of general connections that under specified initial and boundary conditions determine clearly what is certainly or in all probability to be expected, and that this is precisely the reason why the concept of cause is of no use to them. In spite of this we see Mach slipping, in the immediate context of the passages quoted above, back into the wake of Hume. Following is the continuation of the first passage:

Which things are invariably connected, which are mere chance concomitants? By means of this distinction we arrive at the notions of cause and effect. We call one event a cause, with which another (the effect) is invariably connected.¹⁸

From this point on he accepts entirely Hume's characteristic — but fateful — interpretation of the concept of cause as that which occurs in accordance with a physical law. It is not as though in saying "We call one event a cause..." Mach was attempting to formulate a rigorous definition. This is obviously nothing more than a reminder of a current view. For Mach himself is concerned precisely to bar the notion of causality from physics. But in the final analysis the reasons he gives are connected with this current view of causality, which he considers too vague and superficial, and not with the remarks quoted above, of which the present study had to take stock. For they might have revealed to Mach its central thesis, that while the concept of cause is indeed not suited for the formulation of physical

¹⁸ Ibid.

theories, it may yet occupy a legitimate intermediate position, as it were, between two theories applied to the same case or between two cases to which the same theory is applied, because the discovery of a cause permits us to understand why one, and not the other, of these two possibilities must be adopted.

Having discussed Mach, I shall turn now to Campbell's careful analysis of the role in physics of the concepts connected with cause.¹⁹ Campbell bases his analysis on the following concept of a causal relation. It is a dyadic relation between events, of which cause and effect are the relata, and which is (1) lawlike, (2) temporal, and (3) asymmetric. That it is lawlike means that the occurrence of an event of type *B* is invariably attended by the occurrence of an event of type *A*. The requirement of temporality means that if two classes of events, *A* and *B*, are in a causal relation to each other, then the temporal sequence of the occurrence of corresponding events is unambiguously determined. Lastly, the asymmetry of the causal relation consists in the fact that an event of type *A*, insofar as it is the cause of an event of type *B*, cannot be at once the effect of such an event as well. Having defined in this manner the concept of a causal relation, Campbell proceeds to envisage certain relations which physicists have deemed worthy to be called physical laws, and then addresses the question whether these relations are of a causal nature in the defined sense. His finding turns out to be completely negative and contains two points that are relevant to the ideas under discussion.

The first is this. Campbell lays it down as a part of his general position that the laws of physics must be open to experimental testing, and he observes that for this, at least with respect to all experiments carried out in laboratories, the arbitrary creation or modification of particular conditions is characteristic. For example, in testing Ohm's law several different values are given arbitrarily either to the current or to the voltage in a wire in order to measure the corresponding values that result either for the voltage or the current. Now, while in the case of a state of equilibrium it is meaningless to say that the current flowing in a wire is either the cause or the effect of the voltage it is carrying, it has a certain meaning to say that a change in the current is the cause of a corresponding change in the voltage. But the meaning is not that it has now become possible to treat the law linking changes in current to changes in voltage — unlike Ohm's law, from which it is derived — as if it had the structure of a causal relationship. This would be merely to fall back into the old error. What is meant when a change in current is spoken of as the cause of a

¹⁹ N. R. Campbell, *Physics: The Elements* (Cambridge: University Press, 1920), chap. III.

change in voltage is rather the arbitrarily performed act of a human being, by means of which a current flowing in a wire is given a value it did not have before. That this is indeed what is meant appears with particular clarity in the case of Ohm's law because in this case the arbitrary change may affect the voltage as well as the current. If the relation in question were understood merely in terms of the changes in quantity, it would not insure the asymmetry essential to the causal relation. For both changes the sequence of cause and effect would remain completely unspecified. To say that the change in current is the cause of the change in voltage as opposed to the reverse is simply to say that in the case before us someone elected to change the current and not the voltage. A parallel reflection shows the sense in which the causal relation, taken in this way, has a temporal nature. To say that the cause always precedes its effect in time is to assert merely — in the case of the experiment under discussion — that the current, for example, must be changed first before it can be determined what change in voltage has been brought about. This, then, is one of the points that Campbell's analysis takes as central: The use of the notion of causality has a place in physics at least when it is introduced to help describe the possibility and actuality of *modifications brought about arbitrarily by a physicist* in the course of an experiment.

Campbell's subsequent analysis is concerned with the question whether the use in physics of the notion of causality can be defended in any sense other than the one indicated. In this connection he makes a second important remark. It is that contemporary physics has come to take the notion of *process* as one of its fundamental concepts, using it in the quite uncomplicated sense of a mere temporal change in state, the simple course of an occurrence having a sequence in time in which the only thing that happens — as Toulmin once put it, borrowing an expression from Aldous Huxley — is "one damn thing after another". Physics, no doubt, is concerned to ascertain conditions under which processes not only follow their course, but follow it in the manner which the conditions uniquely prescribe — hence it seeks determining conditions, the knowledge of which makes it possible to predict the course a process will follow. This program led first to the development of classical mechanics. A moving body not acted upon by forces, a body falling in free fall, the bodies of the solar system — they all follow a certain path; hence they change their places as well as other properties, and certain combinations of properties determine already at one given moment every subsequent occurrence at every time thereafter. But thereby hangs the entire tale that classical mechanics can tell, and it has no room for causes and effects. Campbell uses the passing of a spark through

a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen followed by an explosion as an example of a process in nature which cannot as yet be understood in terms of the schema outlined above, and which because of, or at least in accordance with, this is given a causal description: the spark is said to be the cause of the explosion. This type of case occasions him to remark as follows:

We are forced at present, owing to a deficiency of knowledge, to state the relation between the spark and the explosion as causal; but we feel that if we knew more about it, we might be able to state it in the form that a process starts in the gas when the spark passes, and after continuing some time, becomes (not causes) an explosion. If we could state the law in that form it would be more satisfactory; the use of the causal relation in a law is a confession of incomplete knowledge.... So little is it our object to order our external judgments in terms of cause and effect that our efforts are consistently directed to ridding ourselves of the necessity for employing cause and effect at all.²⁰

We are now in possession of Campbell's second point. To speak of causes in cases that do not involve human actions is, in the light of the deterministic theories of classical mechanics, tantamount to the implicit admission that the processes in question have been insufficiently analysed; for if the analysis were pushed sufficiently it would lead automatically to the elimination of the concept of causality.

Campbell's first idea, that the concept of causality is legitimately used in physics only to describe the carrying out of experiments, seems to relate antithetically to König's idea — with which the present study began — that it is possible to speak of causes and effects only in connection with unusual situations. A series of experiments which is conceived by a human being and carried out according to plan and in which causes are introduced arbitrarily, seems a situation entirely different from one in which the cause of a single event <...> is sought because the event is perceived as something unexpected or unusual. But the psychological aspect of what is unexpected in an event has already been shown to be secondary; it should not be permitted to lead us astray. To designate an occurrence as unexpected or surprising is only one way to characterize its relation to a sequence of events from which it departs, even if it is an important and — especially in everyday life — commonly used way. What is of primary concern if the concept of cause is to be used correctly is that it not be applied to a process in isolation but only *insofar as it departs from another process*. But this is precisely the situation that arises whenever there is human interference — especially in the case of an experiment. Every purposefully conducted experiment the course of which may be said to involve intended causes is an interfer-

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 66-67 (Chicago: Dover, 1957).

ence by means of which something is made to follow a course *different* from either the one it would have followed in some natural way if it had been left to itself, or the one followed by another experiment the result of which is already known. This is precisely the reason for the subjective value of an experiment: that it can teach us something.

Other authors as well have recently stressed the fact that it is precisely the departures from a course of events presupposed as normal, that, resulting from human action, point essentially to the identification of causes as human actions. In the work of Hart and Honoré referred to above we read the following:

Human action in the simple cases, where we produce some desired effect by the manipulation of an object in our environment, is an interference in the natural course of events which *makes a difference* in the way these develop.²¹

The really decisive component of a human action, insofar as it is designated as the cause of something, is brought into still clearer focus by Toulmin.²² In his study of the concept of cause he too starts with the invitation to "consider first the sorts of everyday situations in which we have occasion to ask questions about causes". Then come examples ("A wireless set, instead of giving out a Haydn symphony, howls dismally..." etc.) showing that the next step remains quite in the same line. Then follows, briefly, the aspect of human interference: In the case of a failure, our interest in the arising of the cause is to find out what ought to have been done differently in order to prevent the catastrophe. Finally he says,

It is not essential that the search for causes should be anthropocentric, but that it should be *diagnostic*, that is, focused on the antecedents in some specific situations of some particular event, is essential.

In accordance herewith, Toulmin arrives, with respect to physics, at the result that the concept of cause has a role to play in the applications of physical theories, but not in the theories themselves. But insofar as human actions are adduced to legitimize the concept of cause in applied physics, it is ultimately essential, if such actions are to be causes, that they be linked to situations characterized by the fact that one sequence of events stands sharply distinguished from *another* which provides, as it were, the logical occasion for recognizing the one as a cause. The fact that the cause can appear on the one hand as that which is spontaneously sought for, and on the other — as in the experiment — as that which is arbitrarily brought about, is of significance for the question as to how the notion of causality

²¹ p. 27.

²² S. Toulmin, *The Philosophy of Science* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1953), pp. 119ff.

arises, but no longer for the question of its logical structure. In the former respect the experiment is obviously on a higher and later stage of development than the enquiry after a cause to which the mere perception of an unexpected event gives rise.

Let us now turn our attention to Campbell's second idea, that the formulation of a physical law by reference to a causal relation always amounts to the admission of incomplete knowledge, and that for this reason the history of physics has shown a tendency to eliminate the use of such references. In order to locate this position immediately and as clearly as possible, it will be well to recall for a moment the previously mentioned carelessness with reference to causal concepts that has been cropping up widely of late. While Campbell points to incomplete knowledge as a reason for taking a process as causal, we read today quite commonly that our incomplete knowledge is responsible for the causal character attributed by quantum mechanics to elementary processes. Whatever may be the concept of causality that figures in the background of the debate on causality in quantum mechanics, it must now be our task to determine which understanding of this conceptuality can justify Campbell's thesis, and for this it will not be enough to refer to his own explanation as given above. It will suffice, however, to have recourse to that causal notion which contains as an essential element the description of what Toulmin refers to as a diagnostic situation.

In order to understand this, we must take stock of the fact that in human experience the world is not given as a whole. If it were — let this be laid down as a premise to set the course of the following considerations — the concept of cause would be unknown to us. As it is however, both ordinary experience and scientific experimentation and theorizing occur generally on the basis of certain very limited zones — to say the least — of the reality of nature. Hence the areas to which the experience both of everyday life and of science give us access are characterized by a border — more sharply defined in the one case than in the other — separating the things belonging to a particular area from the rest. These borders involve spatial and temporal limitations by which, however, they are not exhaustively defined; in some more general sense they have a content of their own. Now it is important to realize that the situation of these borders, while perhaps not essentially subject to conditions, is yet determined by de facto conditions relating not only to man's situation in the world, but also to the goals he pursues in the sciences, and finally to the structure of that area of physical reality insofar as these goals are adapted to it and it is reciprocally adapted to them. As a consequence of these conditions, all of these areas of experience occur in groups. The areas belonging to a single one of these groups show a

broad similarity that gives rise to generalizing assertions about the single area. Furthermore, each area taken in itself is sufficiently closed off from its surroundings to make events within it predictable to a degree commensurate with the needs of everyday life or with the higher requirements of science, whichever the case may be. The creation of the concept of such a *closed system*, as it is called technically, together with the fact that such systems are readily found in physical reality, was fundamental for the establishment of modern physics. Physical laws are concerned with what occurs in them, and what these laws bind together are not events or things which relate as causes and effects, but quantities, properties, and states of the particular systems. However, it often happens that the closed character of a system is significantly violated *from without*, that is, from beyond the boundary separating it from its surroundings, and that what occurs within it more or less suddenly starts to go awry in a manner that can no longer be made intelligible in terms of the conditions that have gone into the concept of the system itself. These are the cases in which the occurrence of an event can no longer be understood or even formulated if the closedness of the system is maintained and for which, relative to the system — which had previously been considered closed — the notion of cause is introduced.

In saying this I have only stated in a way that is new and somewhat more determined in terms of physics what has concerned us for a long time. But now comes the issue under discussion: How are we to go on speaking in the new language when asked how a cause is in fact to be indicated, described or characterized? The following is a partial answer to this question. As long as that which is being characterized is to be understood as a *cause* of something, its characterization, regardless of the form it may take in a given case, will never attain — in most cases not even remotely — the kind of completeness achieved in the description of the states of the closed system in which the disturbance was produced by what is now to be characterized. This, unless I am mistaken, is the circumstance which Campbell envisages when he says that a causal description is characterized by a situation in which there is not as much knowledge as there could be; this statement can be understood in terms of a concept of cause satisfying at least the one condition that a cause only causes something to happen that could not have if the system the states of which have been described were really closed as the description assumes. The reason why the characterization of the cause, and hence of the effect — taken in the ordinary sense as that which actually occurred — is necessarily incomplete is that a complete characterization would be possible only within the framework of a description of the states of a suitably *extended* system. In this framework however, it would

be as meaningless to speak of a cause as it was in the original system.

A typical example taken from physics, that can serve to clarify this situation, is the disturbance of a planetary orbit due to the presence of another planet. It is well known that the discovery of the planet Neptune was a consequence of disturbances recorded in the orbit of Uranus. This discovery led immediately to a typical situation in which the question of a cause was in the forefront, and in which the kind of answer given was to decide whether or not an entire theory would survive: The orbit of Uranus was different from what it should have been on the basis of the Newtonian theory of gravitation and of the factual data on all the then known planets. The most natural assumption, if an otherwise well established theory was still to be maintained, was that the deviations must be caused by a heretofore undiscovered planet. In this case it was even possible to derive from the disturbances such an exact quantitative determination of the cause, that on the basis of the calculations it was possible to locate it in the sky. But it must be made clear that even in a case like this the quantitative — hence informative — indication of a cause is subject to fundamental limitations. This would be most easily seen if a small planet the size of the Earth were given as the cause of disturbances in the orbit of a large planet of the size of Jupiter. Everything will be all right as long as nothing further is asserted with respect to the system composed of the Sun and Jupiter than that the Earth is the cause of irregularities in Jupiter's orbit. Things start getting difficult if greater precision is attempted, for example if the Earth, subject to such and such conditions, is assigned as the cause of such and such irregularities in Jupiter's orbit. For since the planetary influences are mutual, and since that of Jupiter on the Earth is markedly greater than its inverse, the disturbance produced by the Earth on Jupiter's orbit depends primarily on how Jupiter itself may happen to continue in its motion. Hence the precisely determined discrepancy between the disturbed and the undisturbed orbit of Jupiter cannot be entirely identified as a definite function of the Earth. In a case like this the only thing that will prove useful is to replace the system made up of the Sun and Jupiter with the extended system made up of the Sun, Jupiter, and the Earth in such a way as to subsume this *entire* system under the equations pertaining to gravitation. Once this is done, however, it is no longer meaningful to speak of a *cause*, but only of a manner in which the *state* of this entire system changes in the course of time.

What has been described heretofore could be called briefly the dialectic of the causal and the functional or deterministic concept of nature in classical physics — the word 'deterministic' placing its peculiar emphasis on the temporality of things. In a brief recapitula-

tion, this dialectic can be described as follows. It is possible to abstract from the common sense notion of cause a central characteristic which must be taken as a minimal condition required of every causal concept, if that concept is to retain an essential similarity with the common sense one. According to this condition it is not meaningful to speak of the cause of an isolated occurrence, but only of the cause of the fact that one occurrence deviates from another. In many cases this other occurrence is the one that, within the framework of a particular set of parameters containing both empirical and rational elements, is expected or anticipated; in any case it is an occurrence that can be formulated, hence understood, in terms of such parameters. None of this is the cause for the deviating occurrence. What this set of parameters involves may vary from the experiential horizon of an Australian bushman to a highly complicated theory of modern physics supported by ingenious experiments. Such differences are not essential. What is essential is that a horizon of expectations is explicitly mentioned so that a deviating occurrence will stand out against its background, making it possible to inquire meaningfully after the cause of the discrepancy. Conceived in this way, the notion of cause has no immediate connection with the concept of a physical law. Rather, physical laws <...> are formulated in terms of some set of parameters or another that must always be *presupposed* together with everything that belongs to it — including the physical laws — if it is to be possible meaningfully to seek and to identify causes. The laws themselves formulate purely functional connections in terms of the concept of the state of a system. Hume imposed qualifications on the idea that a causal connection is to be understood as a law, but both he and many of his followers persisted in taking the causal connection as the very prototype of physical law. This, however, is a very infelicitous way of associating things, because it relegates physical laws to a purely qualitative status, preventing them from achieving the degree of informativeness provided by quantitatively stated laws of a functional nature. And this deficiency can be made all the more plain if the concept of cause is further subjected to the above mentioned minimal requirement, by which it assumes, in the case of concrete application, a role mediating between two functionally stated laws. However, the non-quantitative character of the notion of cause points to the fact that in dealing with this notion we are dealing with a model for a *concept of explanation* and that as such it has a *positive* role to play in physics.

Taking this as the result of the previous analyses, I shall return in closing to their beginning; it is to be recalled that I presented there the ideas of König in such a way as to bring out the possibility that the two parts of his basic thesis are connected. Once, as was pointed

out, it has been postulated that a meaningful notion of cause must satisfy the minimal requirement to which a second reference has just been made, it becomes, not necessary perhaps, but at least extremely natural to go a step further and assert that cause and effect are things which are not given in space and time, but are rather connected with the *understanding* of the occurrences that are given in space and time. The reason why this development appeared natural is that the description of the kind of situation in which typically the inquiry after causes arises involves necessarily the description of an event that *never took place*. Hence this very situation contains a component of a purely mental sort, and since, furthermore, its description ought to be included in the definition of the cause, it follows that a cause cannot very well have the character of an occurrence. Instead, as König suggested, the concept of cause ought to be taken as the concept of a satisfactory answer to the question "Why?". This puts the notion of cause in close proximity to that of explanation. For to answer the question as to what an explanation is by saying that it is a satisfactory answer to the question "Why?" is at all events to point in a definite direction. Whether a *cause* as well is — as König claims — of the same nature is a question on which the previous considerations have thrown some light and which I do not now wish to pursue any further; I should like to emphasize, however, that in view of all that has been said, König's position on this issue seems to me the natural one, provided that the concept of cause is acquired by way of the concept of the situation in which causes are usually inquired after. Still I should like to adopt König's position — taking the beginning and the end together — insofar as it casts light on the concept of explanation. Another thing that was pointed out towards the beginning of this study is that with his view of a satisfactory answer to the question "Why?" König comes close to the deductive-nomological explanation model of Hempel and Oppenheim while yet departing from them significantly. The agreement consists, as was indicated, in the requirement common to both that that which is to be explained follows logically from certain premises. On the other hand the difference, that must now be made clear, consists in the fact that while König takes the explanandum to be the kind of situation in which the course of events is different from the one expected, Hempel and Oppenheim view it merely as something that occurs in such and such a way, any condition, any event, or any state of a system. Hence they permit the question "Why?" to be asked with regard to anything and everything of this kind, and there can be no doubt as to the paradigm the authors had in mind when they constructed their explanation model. Hempel writes:

The best examples of explanation conforming to the D-N model are based on physical theories of deterministic character....The theory provides a

set of laws...which, given the positions and momenta of the elements of such a system at any one time, mathematically determine their position and momenta at any other time. In particular, these laws make it possible to offer a D-N explanation of the system's being in a certain state at a given time, by specifying...the state of the system at some earlier time.²³

At another point we find the very general observation that in a case of concrete application, the D-N model shows that

given the particular circumstances and the laws in question the occurrence of the phenomenon *was to be expected*; and it is in this sense that the explanation enables us to *understand why* the phenomenon occurred.²⁴

I am now in a position to state why I have made it my purpose to draw a line of demarcation between the functionalistic program that has constantly proven more and more successful in the construction of physical theories, and a certain program of a concept of causality which is taken from the everyday sphere, which is viewed in certain circles as "the ancestor, dead and buried, of the functionalistic program" and in others as this program itself, but which in reality may take a completely proper and systematic place even in physics and even today. For *first of all*, it can be readily understood from what has been said how the D-N model — a proposal in some respects, no doubt, helpful, in others however extremely bizarre — came to be put forth as an explication of the concept of explanation. This, to repeat in all brevity — even in illicit brevity — came about as the result of an identification, legitimate within certain limitations, of the structure of physical and deterministic laws, of the illegitimate identification of a deterministic and a causal scheme of thought, and finally of the legitimate connection of the notion of causality with the concept of explanation. The illicit middle step was the work of Hume and might have figured as the subject of a clever science fiction story even then. *Secondly* however, the present considerations may serve as a kind of propaedeutic for the development of a concept of explanation which is oriented, not to the scheme of functional laws and predictability, but to the kind of situation in which a part of physics, not permitting the explanation of a phenomenon, has become questionable, and in which the cause of this failure is inquired after. The question of how to elaborate positively such a concept of explanation goes beyond the limits of the present study.

²³ Op. cit., p. 351.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 337.

SOME FUNDAMENTAL THOUGHTS ON A PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

Georg Picht†

Translation by Michael Heim,

Dedicated to Edward Laut,
virtuoso cellist and master teacher at the University of Kansas

There is an age-old connection between philosophy and music. It was a philosopher, Pythagoras, who laid the fundamentals on which to this day European music rests, and, in the music created on those foundations, philosophy recognized its own essence: philosophy, according to Plato, is the highest form of music. Both these arts are thus joined inseparably in their inner destiny. They are different manifestations of one spirit. Today they are both, philosophy as well as music, threatened in their traditional substance: their common foundation is under dispute. Thus in both areas there is emerging a salutary challenge, a need to reevaluate the very elements of

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Four volumes of articles by Georg Picht have appeared from the Verlag Klett-Cotta, bearing the titles, *Die Verantwortung des Geistes; Wahrheit, Vernunft, Verantwortung; Hier und Jetzt – Philosophieren nach Auschwitz und Hiroshima*: Vol. I, *Philosophische Schriften*, and Vol. II, *Politische Aufsätze*. In addition, there is a course of "dialogue lectures" bearing the title, *Theologie – was ist das?* from the Kreuz Verlag. The publishing house Klett-Cotta plans to publish an approximately ten volume edition of the *Vorlesungen und Schriften* out of Picht's extensive literary estate. The first volumes to appear will be his lectures on *Kants Religionsphilosophie* and *Kunst und Mythos*. A small volume of "Gedenkreden" by Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, Wolfgang Wieland, Heinz Eduard Tödt, Helmut Becker, and Konrad Gottschick that will represent a first attempt to honor the voluminous life work of George Picht is also in preparation by this publisher.

everything we up until now have taken for granted. In this situation, and without either of them knowing it, philosophy and music have become interdependent in a new way. Once again they will have to learn from each other.

In trying to understand the destiny of music, philosophy is dealing with its own concerns. Striving to perceive music and its phenomena in an effort to understand it philosophically — and this means to explore it from the inside — philosophy strives at the same time to discover the soil in which it has its own roots. Conversely, the same relationship towards philosophy holds true for any music that takes itself seriously. All music that does more than copy pre-given models of a certain style, all music that is capable of developing its own forms, that means: all authentic music, is a presentation of truth, and truth can only be presented by someone who is able to recognize it. We speak of a “language of sounds” or of “musical thoughts”. These ways of speaking do not creep in by accident when we try to describe what happens in music, nor are they mere metaphors: They should be taken literally. Music is a primary form of thinking that can find no other way of expression than in sound; therefore it repels every attempt to reduce it to mere ideas. There are manifestations of truth that can only be known, thought out, and brought forth in music. But such musical thinking requires intellectual response if it is not to lose its way. Music can discover its own truth only if it understands itself and its task; music must articulate its claim to truth, and, if it undergoes a crisis, it must reestablish this claim. For this reason, music must not be content with thinking in tunes. It needs concepts in order to understand itself. Music, then, is perhaps more dependent upon philosophy than philosophy is upon music.

If one wishes to understand a phenomenon, everything depends upon a proper assessment of the set of dimensions to which that phenomenon belongs. What areas must we penetrate if we want to understand the elements of music or of art in general? Schelling begins his *Philosophy of Art* with the words: “To construct art (to design a comprehensive concept of art as a whole) means to define its place in the universe. Defining this place is the only explanation of art there is” (*Werke* V, 373). As bold as they may sound today, these sentences are obligatory to any inquiry into the essence of music because they derive from the same great perception that guided the Greeks to lay the common fundament of European music and European philosophy. Plato as well as Schelling, when trying to define the essence of music, did not commence from the music made by human beings; he too explained music by way of its “place in the universe” that means by the “harmony of the spheres” (stars). Even when today we have reasons which prevent us from adopting this

explanation we should not abandon the horizon opened up by it. The words of Schelling are thus a point of departure we ought not to relinquish.

If today we would dare to take Schelling's directness of language for our example, we could say: The place of music in the universe is defined by the observation that music is a presentation of time. Music presents time not only through the element of rhythm; its tonal material also presents time, because sounds are the elements of tonal sequences between which exist tensions that determine the courses of movement. Even each single sound is defined by a certain frequency of vibrations and by its duration, and it is thus a purely temporal phenomenon. We understand music when we know what and how time is; we learn what time is when we understand music. This implies that time must be a phenomenon of a considerably higher complexity than we usually imagine it to be when we think of it as an indistinct, homogeneous passing from one evanescent, insubstantial something into another. We can also dispense then with the far-reaching attempt to explicate the phenomenon of time in the full diversity of its structures and interrelations, its appearances and its modifications. For, if our hypothesis that music is the representation of time proves justified, every accomplished work of music will be able to achieve the equivalent of an accomplished conceptual explication of time. Therefore it will suffice here to recall briefly the last comprehensive philosophical doctrine of the essence (*Wesen*) of time we possess, that is, Kant's theory of time from his *Critique of Pure Reason*. This theory will lead us quickly and directly to the central problems of contemporary music.

I

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant defines time as the "pure form of inner intuition". He teaches that every single phenomenon that is given to our consciousness must necessarily as such appear in time — no matter whether these phenomena are phenomena of "outer intuition" in space or phenomena of inner intuition, that is, ideas or thoughts, emotions or dreams. Time is "intuition" (*Anschauung*) because phenomena are directly given in time; time is "pure" intuition (*reine Anschauung*) because it is not perceived by the senses, but, conversely, time is already pre-given as the condition for the possibility of every perception; time is the pure "form" of intuition because its own form — in other words, the structure of time as such — is at the basis of every phenomenon that is given in time so that time itself appears in every appearance.

At this point we will interrupt our recollection of Kant in order to

draw some preliminary inferences from the above regarding our definition of music. Music is — so we assumed — presentation of time. Now, if it is true that all phenomena as such — the phenomena of nature as well as the phenomena of thinking and of the realm of the *psyche* — can appear only in time, and are therefore determined by the structure of time, and are thus temporal; if this is true, then time is itself not a phenomenon that has its rightful place in the universe alongside other equal-ranking phenomena. Then the universe as a whole is in time. Then time determines the structure of the universe. Time is that which makes it a universe; time is as such then the “*universalitas*” [universality]; time is itself the universality of the universe. We have yet to show what this means. When we define music as presentation of time, we can only mean by this that, in its tonal space, music brings to light this very universality in which all that can be constantly finds itself. It is the medium of the spirit in general. Music is not, as one tends narrowly to think, the expression of human innerliness in its conflict with an alienated outer world; nor is it, on the contrary, the presentation “in” time of the pure objectivity of formal relations which can be defined mathematically. Rather, music brings to light time itself as that universal medium in which both spheres, both the vibrating innerliness of subjectivity and the objectivity of the “external world”, are found together. Insofar as music causes time to appear, it bridges the gap between subjectivity and objectivity; it points beyond the ancient alienation [of subject and object]. This is why the word “salvation” recurs whenever one tries to describe the effects of music.

We now return to Kant’s concept of time, since there is still more to be gained from it for the understanding of music. Time is conceived by analogy to an infinite continuous line, the points of which correspond to a row of moments vanishing one after another into the past. Time appears to be a one-dimensional continuum. All the reality of appearances is possible only in this continuum. While everything vanishes in time, time as such remains always identical to itself. Time is, as Kant says, unchangeable and abiding, though every appearance “in” time does change inasmuch as it is constantly vanishing. How do we arrive at this paradoxical, even self-contradictory notion of a continuous vanishing which does not change and thus at the same time stands? Permit me to answer this question here by oversimplifying a richly articulated thought in an inadequate way. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant wishes to demonstrate the conditions for the possibility of classical physics. A theoretical foundation for physics must explain how it is possible to apply pure mathematics to the phenomena of nature. As in the case of the series of [natural] numbers, the infinite sequence of time can be

represented as analogous to a one-dimensional line on which numbers are continuous. At the same time, however, we designate each particular number — take the number 5 for instance — as the comprehensive unity of the preceding numbers. Thus number is unity in succession. This presupposes the constancy of the continuum, the unity of continuity. The validity of calculational rules depends upon this unity that cannot be derived but which is ever already presupposed. In the concept of continuity conceived as a concept of pure time, two things are simultaneously included: abiding unity and succession. Accordingly, the validity of the laws of nature in classical physics depends upon the non-demonstrable, but always presupposed, unity and homogeneity of time in the succession of temporal phenomena. There is a structural connection between numbers and the phenomena of nature because both represent time. Nature therefore obeys mathematics, or we could just as well say the converse: mathematics obeys nature.

If the complete essence of time were already explicit in the above statements, then music would have nothing to do with time, since musical phenomena cannot be derived from time as described above. We must, therefore, go one step further. The paradoxical conjunction of abiding unity and flowing succession stems from a profound thought which, as could be shown, constitutes the coherence of the architectonic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but this thought was never developed by Kant himself because it goes beyond the limits of human reason according to his teaching. We find this thought in its original form, which Kant inherited from the philosophical tradition, in Plato. In his *Timaeus*, Plato defines time as “an eternal image, proceeding according to number, of that eternity which abides in unity”, (*Timaeus* 37 D 5,6). All definitional elements of the Kantian conception of time are found in this definition of time: the progressive continuum of time in its correlation to the progression of numbers, and the relationship this progression has to a unity that abides and remains constant. But what is left obscure in Kant — i.e., the relation between the abiding unity and the continuum of passing away — is defined in its essence here [[by Plato]]. The continuum relates to the abiding unity as an image relates to its original. Time is, therefore, homogeneous because the same [*das Gleiche*, the equivalent] always appears in it, and unity is thus not as much present in time as it is by itself, namely, as the abiding present. According to Plato, time is the pure appearance of pure being. Now we understand why Kant likewise defines time as a pure form of intuition, for intuition is the condition for the possibility of appearance or its all-comprehensive horizon. The concept of time as pure form of intuition is an explication of the Platonic teaching. But,

whereas in Kant the inner relation between the notion of intuition and the other determinative elements of his conception of time remains in darkness, in Plato everything is cast out of a single mold.

Now we must show that the law of form in all European music to this day rests upon the very same conception of time. In Plato, there is homogeneity in the continuous series of all appearances in time because *the same always appears in time as such*. Thus every passing appearance within the continuum of time remains related to a modal pitch system through the structure of time, which is identical in itself. In modal music, accordingly, and in the system of tonal music which achieves even greater consistency through subjectivity as will, every tone is related to the unity of tonality represented as such by the key tone. The artistic unity of each work created in a tonal system is constituted by that relationship to the unity of tonality which is constantly maintained in the sequence of connected tones. This artistic unity constitutes the unity of all possible musical phenomena in this tonal space. Of course, there are works in which musical substance results from the tension built up between an individual form and the structure of the tonal system. But even these works are, in their contradictory constitution, defined by their relationship to the tonal system. Even their musical form is made possible only through the sonorous space of tonality. It could be said, then, that the basic figure of every musical creation in tonal systems is the presentation of a world conceived as a cosmos: an immeasurable plenitude of possible phenomena becomes related throughout to an ultimate end and, at the same time, prior unity. Plato's definition of time can be applied to every work of the European musical tradition up to the dissolution of tonality; every work of this epoch is "an image, proceeding according to number, of that eternity which abides in unity". This would have proven, however, the basic hypothesis that, for the history of European music, music is presentation of time. Only because the essence of time appears in music can the definition of time serve as a definition of the musical work of art as well.

If we want to understand what this means, we must use the traditional name for the unity of being eternally abiding by itself. In Plato, that unity bears the name "God", and this concept of God in Greek philosophy has had such an effect on Christian theology that even Hegel still defines his concept of absolute spirit by means of the same ontological predicates developed by Plato in his profound investigation into the unity of being in his dialogue, *Parmenides*. If it is true that Plato's definition of time can be understood to define the basic form of musical structure in the tonality systems of the European tradition as well, then this means nothing other than

that, analogous to the system of Hegel's philosophy, the system of tonality is to be interpreted as an image of the idea of the Platonic God, or, to put it in more modern terms, as an image of the Absolute. Thus all tonal music is — in a sense seldom understood — absolute music, since it moves within the horizon of that basic understanding of the temporality of time which conceives time as the image of unity which is identical with itself. But only then can we truly understand the renunciation of the system of tonality undertaken in recent decades; this is because the God who was understood as absolute spirit, the God of the Greek philosophers, "is dead", as Nietzsche said in a celebrated text. The Absolute, in the sense of the unmovable unity of being, has lost its splendor and its credibility. We no longer find ourselves as members of a world that reflects an unchanging unity, a world that is a "uni-verse".

These observations are so important if we want to understand the situation of contemporary music that we must linger awhile here. Opponents of atonal music usually say that tonality alone truly corresponds to nature. They are correct, if nature is understood to be cosmos, for the Greek idea of the natural cosmos can be shown to be, as the totality of all appearances in time, an image of the unity of the Absolute. In the strictest sense of the word, "cosmos" is an image of divinity, in particular, an image of the God of the Greek philosophers. But modern physics has taught us that this image of a world as a closed system, representing an unchanging unity, is not in accordance with the reality of nature. This image of God is irreversibly shattered. We know that the world is not tuned to Kepler's harmony. Whoever wishes, nonetheless, to adhere to it, even subjectively in good faith, is lying. Whoever wishes to base music on nature must also be prepared to learn from the natural sciences about the truth of nature, and he must not balk when contradicted by science. It is not within human power to dispose over that which has to be conceived as natural. We must recognize the truth as it shows itself and as it breaks through all human conceptions, whether we know it and want to have it so or not.

But the extinction of the Absolute also destroys the sphere of its appearance. In a historical situation where music departs from tonality, we first begin to see the rich treasure of substance and form bestowed on European music through its Pythagorean foundations, and we begin to see the context which always finds expression in tonal music, a context usually perceived subconsciously but for that reason no less effectively. We are accustomed to reflect only on the particular contents of an individual work of art, and it is usually not clear to us that the formal laws governing entire epochs of art history also contain a wealth of intrinsic meanings which are then also

implicit in every individual work regardless of its particular substance. Whoever has abandoned tonality should become aware of what it is that has happened. If the above is correct, tonality implies the entire system of classical metaphysics as the contents implicitly stated along with every sequence of tones ordered according to tonal relationships. Its form is based on the thought that nature is a cosmos, and that everything temporal is the Absolute, appearing in an image. Once the cosmos is irreversibly shattered, music — and not only music — finds itself in a gigantic vacuum, and the question arises as to how music is to endure in that everywhere and nowhere in which all music actually finds itself once it has departed from the coherent world represented by tonality. Modern music tries to give unity to the individual work of art by means of a total organization from out of itself, a unity bestowed on previous art by the fact that its laws of form represented the unity of the whole cosmos, the unchanging unity of time. But the unity of total organization deprives the work of art of its symbolic character; the work of art is reduced to one thing lost among other things.

Obviously, such a process is a fundamental threat to the inherent possibility of art in all that constitutes it as art. It is no wonder that desperation over such an event tempts many groups to resist that truth of the development of modern art, the history of which makes its way in the development of modern music in such a magnificent and even heroic way. It is precisely in the best works of the new music that this plight is most evident — as evident as the mendacity of all attempts to pretend that the cosmos has not been shattered. The true works point toward the future, toward a new appearance of the essence of time which in its own way will contain within itself everything that is.

In the above discussion of our basic claim that music is presentation of time, we have not yet attended to one essential element of this thesis. We spoke previously only of time, but we have not considered what it means to say that music is supposed to “present” time. We must now investigate the function of presentation in music. The pure form of artistic presentation, regardless of the contents presented, is generally called “style”. If music is presentation of time, and if style does not envelop externally that which it presents as if in an alien husk, then the formal laws of musical style must themselves be derivable from the essence of time.

It would be an immense task to test in detail the correctness of such a far-reaching claim. Let it suffice to demonstrate the notion by means of a single example. In the bitter feud between the Vienna School and the direction proposed by Stravinsky and Hindemith, the antithesis between two concepts of style played a major role, an anti-

thesis which was usually designated, rather mistakenly, with the catchwords "Expressionism" and "Objectivism". We spare the reader a detailed exposition of the intentions that came to be connected with both these concepts, intentions that are highly complex and often self-contradictory. The ancestry of this antithesis is, however, important. It has seldom been considered that the antithesis has its origin in the celebrated antithesis of Dionysian and Apollonian art, the antithesis employed by the young Nietzsche in developing his metaphysical interpretation of Richard Wagner's Total Work of Art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*). But the recourse to Nietzsche is not enough to uncover the deeply hidden implications of the opposition between Expressionism and Objectivism, between Dionysian and Apollonian art. We must reflect on the source from which Nietzsche drew and developed this opposition. It was not for nothing that Nietzsche was a classical philologist. When he wanted to create a philosophy of music, he read the great treatise on music in the second book of Plato's *Laws*. There he found, right at the beginning (653D), a reduction of all music to the unification of Apollo and Dionysos and discovered a philosophy which unfolded the entire realm of musical possibilities out of the polarity denoted by these two names. If one examines Plato closely, one sees that the attribution of the origin of music to Apollo and Dionysos is something more than a myth of the legendary origin of music. Rather, the names of the gods serve to designate both of the first principles of being that Plato had taken over from Pythagorean teachings: Apollo stands for *peras* ("boundary") or limitation, and Dionysos stands for the *apeiron* ("boundlessness") or the unlimited. The duality of both of these principles, however, is based on the polarity we have already considered in the definition of time, the polarity between the unmoved One and the flowing continuum. The unchanging *peras*, structure, predominates in the realm of the Apollonian; the principle of the continuum, limitless transiency, predominates in the realm of the Dionysian. The combination of these two polar determinations comes to light clearly in every motion, for every motion is performed in the continuum, and yet it is still this particular motion because it has at the same time a definite order and a measure, or, as the Greeks put it, it has a rhythm. Now, according to Plato, the original essence of the psyche consists in its being motion. The psyche is defined as that which moves itself, and this self-movement is born out of the conjunction of two principles which could be called spontaneity and receptivity — save that in Plato the second principle, the dynamics of the psyche, is understood to be an active force. The first principle brings about form, limitation, and unity; the second leads to the dissolution of order, to limitlessness and multiplicity. The free

self-movement of the psyche occurs only when both forces are in balance. If they come apart, the psyche is no longer moved by itself but by something else; it is no longer free. This simplified, and therefore summary recollection of the Platonic teaching on the psyche shows that both basic forces of psychic motion are concealed under the name of Dionysian and of Apollonian music, and that these forms are the ambiguous mode in which the original polarity of time appears in the human soul. So in Plato too, music is presentation of time. But the presentation of time occurs in the realm of the psyche; the soul, and the body moved to dance by the soul, is therefore the sphere in which music appears, and it is the horizon in which music is presented. But in Plato the psyche does not refer to some private innerliness of an isolated subject, nor does it mean the irrational. In Plato, "soul" (*Seele*) is what Hegel means by "spirit" (*Geist*): the self-moving universal reason which sublates into itself whatever is irrational and individual.

Once these connections have become clear, we can then see how absurd it is to place the search for expression in opposition to the search for order. Antagonism between both of these moments which occur in every motion is an antagonism arising from the very essence of time itself. It cannot be short-sightedly reduced to antagonisms in the structure of our contemporary society, since the underlying world-conception (*Weltentwurf*) has persisted nearly without alteration for the last two-and-a-half thousand years through all the upsets and revolutions of the political and social structures, regardless of whether the world was ruled by Romans or Teutons, by the Church hierarchy, the German emperors, the feudal lords, the bourgeoisie, or the revolutionaries. This world-conception is founded so deeply in the essence of time that it has scarcely been modified even in modern physics. The ontological basis of physics is still the polarity of structure and continuum, and the same polarity still generates that elementary tension out of which all music, regardless of schools, develops. The difference between the appearance of this polarity in tonal and atonal music lies not in that in the new music the polarity has vanished, but rather in that the polarity may no longer be brought into a balance, as was done previously. In the traditional cosmos, the mobility of the continuum and the static nature of structure are maintained in balance, in an equilibrium that may not be over-hastily dubbed a "natural" balance, for this equilibrium has been established, according to a Greek myth, by an act of violence, by Zeus vanquishing the Titans. The balance of both polar principles, stabilized by the unchanging unity of being, has been torn asunder by the dissolution of the Absolute, without there having yet been found, however, a new order for the antagonistic moments of

all music, and of everything temporal as such. The basic structure of every [piece of] music has been disrupted profoundly down to the so-called "sound materials" and down to the elements of rhythm. The result is the paradoxical phenomenon that total order dominates the expressive style, and that, conversely, the music of Stravinsky lives on impulses of [rhythmic] movement which the music itself seems, from a superficial perspective, to negate. Here we can see how deeply founded the Platonic teaching is that only the balance of both contrary forces makes possible the freedom of psychic motion. Through the disintegration of the Absolute, the artistic substance of music has been wounded to its inmost core. This bears witness to the ineluctable relationship that music has to truth. But this process should not be regarded as something merely negative. The great music of the twentieth century transforms this process itself into its very own subject: it demonstrates the consequences of the destruction of the classical appearance of the essence of time; it ruthlessly unmask the illusions with which that which is no longer true wants to reinstate itself; by negation, it achieves the breakthrough to new possibilities of how time can appear.

Within the horizon of the classical concept of time, the appearance of time, as we have seen, was the same as the appearance of the unity of time. The unity of time, however, is the unity of the universe in its universality, and the unity of the universe is being (*Sein*). The appearance of the unity of time is the appearance of being, and the appearance of being is called truth. For this reason, we can now state: truth is the appearance of the unity of time. If music, as we have claimed, is the presentation of time, then music must bring the unity of time into appearance; music is then, directly, the presentation of truth. The truth appears, as we learned, in the psyche, or more exactly, in the psychic processes of motion determined by polar forces. The diverse types of processes of psychic movement correspond, according to Plato, to the various types of human ethos; ethos is the horizon for the presentation of music. It is only in the twentieth century that we have learned a method of precise analysis that confirms the truth of this Platonic teaching, namely, the graphological method of interpreting handwriting. Each gesture of the human being is a process of motion; handwriting has a peculiar quality in that it graphically fixes the form of a process of motion. In the fixity of handwriting, we can grasp precisely and interpret that which holds true of every gesture. But what is the principle of this interpretive procedure? Robert Heiss says, "Just as the character of a human being is a natural process and has a distinctive form, so the writing of a human being is a flowing process of movement and is an occurrence of patterned form. When interpreting, the method of

graphology decodes nothing less than the essential embodiment of these processes", (*Die Deutung der Handschrift*, Claassen, Hamburg 1966, p. 11). The whole character — in Greek, the "ethos" of the human being — emerges in the polarity of both moments of time as it is presented in a particular movement, in the concrete reciprocal relation of both basic Platonic principles of psychic movement. The relationship of mobile process and structural law, which seems at first glance to be a purely formal relationship, manifests an infinite plentitude of concrete contents in the exchange of interplay [[between the relata]]. The entire disposition a person has toward life in the full breadth of relations to the world can be inferred with a high degree of precision from the structural tensions of those basic forces in which, as we have seen, time appears. Human life is then, if the expression be allowed, pure temporalization (*Zeitigung*). Character is the way in which the human being conducts himself in the pure horizon of time. A person can admit time or deny time, be open to time or be closed to it — there are endless variations of the way in which a person can, in the horizon of time, respond to the phenomenality of time. But, if truth is the appearance of the unity of time, then all possible forms of human ethos prove to be ways of being-in-the-truth or of deception. Similar to the graphic images of handwriting, music too presents in sound the multiplicity of possible tensions between the process of motion and structured form; in sustaining this tension, a style is created. If music presents the pure forms of possible motions in time, then music contains a wealth of meaning and expression which is as rich as the forms of human existence in general. As in the case of human existence, music too moves in a constant interplay between truth and deception. But music does not achieve the presentation of time in movement unconsciously; it does so rather in the freedom of the spirit. The point of music is not unconscious mimesis; its aim is, moreover, the basic forms of every possible mimesis. For this reason, all great music discovers the true sphere in which human existence would otherwise move about unconsciously. This is the spiritual task of music.

II

As we can now see more clearly, the true sphere, in which human existence moves otherwise unawares and which great music explores, is time. The vacuum that opens up with the extinction of the unity of the Absolute awaits a new appearance of the essence of time that in turn may encompass in itself everything that is. Only in this way can that horizon once again be opened which was swished away — as Nietzsche says, as if by a sponge — by the darkening of the Absolute.

What is our own orientation with regard to the essence of time?

The question goes far beyond the outlines drawn here. We will confine ourselves to some simple statements which intend to convey no more than a first suggestion. Time is indeed, for our immediate understanding, a continuum, but it is not homogeneous, as it was in the classical scheme of the world. We distinguish three modes of time: the past, the present, and the future. According to the classical concept of time, the differentiation of these three modes of time is merely a subjective illusion resulting from the particular arbitrary standpoint of the observer located somewhere in the passage of time. According to when a particular person lives, has lived, or will live, a certain future exists for this person which for another is the past and which for a third person is the present. Previously people believed that nothing changes in the passage of time as such if, relative to a particular standpoint, one space of time appears as future and another appears as past. This way of considering things, nevertheless, underscores the fact that the modes of time are not identical in structure. For the past, there is a law which must be regarded as the foundation of all the laws of nature, namely, the law that nothing that has once happened can be made not to have happened. Nothing can be undone once it has appeared. A second phenomenon is based on this law essential to the constitution of time, namely, the phenomenon of the irrevocability, the irreversibility of time. In the classical model of time, one cannot see why we cannot travel backwards in time along the lines of the time-machine of H. G. Wells; the direction of time cannot be determined on the basis of the essence of time. But if nothing that has once happened can be taken away again, that is, be moved, then time can only move forwards. The first basic axiom of time simultaneously lays down the fixed direction of time. In contrast to the past, we call the future the leaway for that which is still open, or, as we also say, for that which is possible. Between the boundaries of the necessary (what cannot be taken away) and of the impossible (what is irreversible), there is a realm in which there is no fixity in the things that will happen; here we can only distinguish various degrees of probability. The future is thus not identical in structure to the past. It is not a closed but an open structure. Only here does the direction of time truly arise; time always moves forward into the open. The structural difference in the modes of time makes possible the movement of time. The difference is, therefore, not a subjective illusion, but it is constitutive for the essence of time.

What we developed in these specifications is nothing other than our immediate, or, one could also say, our natural, experience of time. There is no experience of time in which there would be no

immediate sense of the difference between past, present, and future. Once this has become clear, we can see how paradoxical it is that the idea of the cosmos, founded in the classical concept of time, is held even today to be the "natural" world-picture. For, by distinguishing the three modes of time, we forcefully suspend the most direct way in which we experience nature in the course of our lives and in the series of generations, or, to put it more precisely, the distinction explains our experience away as illusion. We cannot deal with this in any more detail here, but it was necessary to make some indications since the concept of what is "natural" plays a large role in discussions of modern music, and it is necessary to make it clear that traditional music is not in fact based on the natural experience of time.

We have not yet spoken of the present because it is the most difficult [[mode of time]] to understand. But before we can understand what the present is, we must once again turn to the past and the future. The traditional doctrine of the constant flow of time in its contrast to the unchanging One overlooks the very simple fact that the past does not pass away. When we find a stone in the soil, we can determine the geological epoch to which it belongs; the way in which the stone appeared is still present in it today. Each human being bears the history of his life, bears the history of his ancestors in the features of his face, and each person's past fate is his present. Nothing that has ever happened remains without some effect, and in its effects the event is preserved. The doctrine of the flow of time forgets that perdurance too is a pure mode of time and that everything that has ever emerged perdures in one way or another. If we wish to define perdurance, we can only say that it is the presence of the past. But we also know that this perdurance will also continue in the future, specifically, as that necessity which places limits on the open leaway of what is possible. We must, therefore, necessarily speak not only of a present but of even a future of the past. This statement is constitutive of time, for the continuity of time depends on it.

We provisionally defined the future by way of the concept of possibility. What can be real tomorrow is a possibility today. But, if we can already say today that something is possible, then the future is already present today in the form of possibility. We must, therefore, dare to speak of the future as having a present. The tree is already there contained in the seed, and every act of hoping, of planning, and every anxiety, even every stirring of life in general allows us to experience the present of the future. This is even true of memory, for memory does not preserve the past as something that has passed away and vanished, but it rather constantly discloses the past anew as

delineating the leaway for future possibilities. Now we can define the structure of the present: the present is not an arbitrary point on an infinite line of time, a point that is already gone while we are speaking of it. The present is, rather, the constantly new unity of time in the interconnection of past and future, a unity in which the entire space of the past is preserved and in which the entire breadth of the future is already disclosed as a leaway of possibilities. But, if the present is the unity of time, then the essence of time is making-present (*Vergegenwärtigung*). The present, of course, must no longer be understood to be the unchangeable present of the unmoved One — that One which is itself untouched by the passage of time and stands therefore outside of time. Time constantly produces its unity anew, but it does not do so arbitrarily; it remains bound to the law that everything past is to be preserved in the way it once was and the way it therefore remains. Thus we need not abandon the idea that the unity of time holds the world together, but this unity presents itself in a different way for us. It is not an unmoved identity, but it has itself a history. The Absolute is not extinguished, but we have discovered that it moves. It is for this reason no longer to be found in its old place. Nor is it any longer “absolute” in the sense of a transcendence freed of all temporality. The unity of time is neither substance nor subject.

In the classical conception of the essence of time, as it has persisted from Plato to Hegel and into our own time, truth is the appearance of the unity of time, the making-present of the eternal present. This definition of truth is not abrogated by the discovery that the Absolute moves. What has once been true remains true. But the sense of truth is transformed. Truth is no longer a closed sphere. In philosophy, the idea of a closed system has become just as untrue as the reversion to the key note in tonal music. The unity of time, and with it truth, is opened to the future. It leads us to show us our open possibilities, and it binds us to our responsibility. Thus talk of the “essence” of music is misleading because it could be taken to refer to music as if it had an essence that eternally remains the same. For this reason, we have spoken of the spiritual task of music, and not of the essence of music, for the concept of a task refers us to an open future. And now we want to see what our delineation of the structure of time contributes to the understanding of music.

Our basic thesis was that music is presentation of time. We proceeded to define this more precisely. Music brings the unity of time to appearance, and the appearance of the unity of time is truth. The realm of musical appearance is the human psyche as self-moving reason (*Vernunft*) and the body as it is set into dance by the psyche; it is thus that form of being in time which has for its subject-matter the

presentation of being-in-time. The manner in which the human being comports himself in the pure horizon of time, and thereby in the truth, is his ethos, an ethos which is modified according to whether the person allows time or denies it, opens himself to time or is closed to it. These various possibilities of being in time constitute the presentational space of all music. A music that fulfills its spiritual task opens the true space in which human existence moves otherwise unawares. We call the temporal horizon of human existence "history". The unity of time appears ever anew in the continuity of history. But this unity moves in the progression of time. The appearance of the unity of time, therefore, always occurs in the particular given present as a unique epiphany which reflects in itself the basic forms possible for human ethos. It is thus the constantly new present in which the appearance of the unity of time, refracted prismatically through human ethos, can occur. If music presents the unity of time, then the work of art must intrinsically have the nature of an event. Music is an event, or it is not music. We must now ask what this means.

The character of a musical event can be discerned in the peculiar essence of the musical work. The score written by the composer is not the finished work, for the score is not yet sound. The score outlines nothing more than a sketch of future possibilities for sounds. On the other hand, neither is the actual sounding musical form the finished work, since it is only one of countless possibilities of actual sounds prescribed by the score. Thus, in the realm of music, there is never any completion of a work. The musical work is never finished; it is only a configuration of possibilities which lie in the future and await their fulfillment.

But these possibilities are supposed to enter into reality. Whatever is set into the score is supposed to become sound — the piece should be, as we say, performed. Performance is always tied to a definite occasion. It happens at a particular time, in a particular space, for a particular audience, by way of these particular musicians and not others. If the musicians are really artists, they will on this occasion make one of those possibilities projected in the score happen as if the art-work were now being born for the first time. And, indeed, that is so: only this time and never again can it appear in this particular splendor as it comes to presentation in sound now, at this hour. The event for which music is structurally organized occurs only when the uniqueness of the hour of its sounding is fulfilled. Pierre Boulez, in his Third Piano Sonata, drew the consequence of this awareness by having the basic form of the score structured ever anew. Here the score does not merely prescribe one single sequence of tones, but it projects various configurations of possibilities of the

structural elements from which the performer can freely choose. Thus a music comes into being that no recording can reproduce.

The score contains the fixed structure for an infinity of future possibilities which achieve their always unique actuality only in the present of an event. This is the basic form of the musical work of art. But, as we now see, this basic form represents the structure of time in its interconnection of past, future, and present. Music is presentation of time because its own structure is purely temporal. The polarity of fixed form and open possibility, which emerges in the duality of score and acoustic event, recurs in the polarity of shaped form and flowing process of movement, of Apollonian form and Dionysian drive, and from the tension between the latter arises, as we have seen, the peculiarity of musical style. The polarity of style also represents, as we now know, the structure of time. What finally occurs in the acoustic event of music is the merging of this one fulfilled present out of a pre-given structure from the past with the possibility of acoustic movement lying in the future. Then the unity of time suddenly appears. The unconsciousness of time which surrounds us is broken. We become transported to the truth of this moment. What happens is the appearance of truth itself in the bright light of that infinite openness in which the past and the future are simultaneously disclosed to us as our own present.

The performance of works from past epochs is also brought into a new light once we understand that the score is a conception of future possibilities. Only someone who considers a musical work to be a finished thing can believe that the performance of works from earlier times is nothing else than the attempt historically to conserve something long vanished. No one can determine whether or not and when the possibilities projected by a score are exhausted. Just as the pure analysis of time made it necessary for us to speak of the future of the past, so too the analysis of the structure of the musical work necessarily brings us to recognize that spiritual creations from the depths of history harbor in their clearly outlined form possibilities for our own future. There is deep significance in the fact that psychoanalysis is able to cure through pure anamnesis [recollecion]. For this means that an epoch falls ill when it is not open to the truth of its history. It follows from the essence of time that our future is also always the future of our history. This history is, for the most part, concealed; we have the tendency to suppress it and to distort its true process. We withdraw from our past even when we appear to be cultivating it conspicuously. We reify the historical (*das Geschichtliche*) insofar as we consider it as merely something of old history (*Historisches*) — when we think we have evaded its obligation. But whoever seeks to escape from the historical past, and

thereby from his destiny, forgoes every possibility of freedom; the past then swallows him unawares and insiduously. If we treat the past as something dead, it throws its shadows over the future and lets us die before we have been born. For this reason, it is a no less obligatory service to have works of earlier epochs of our history resound in their pure, unadulterated form than it is to have new works composed. Here too, what we need now should happen so that we do not fail our future.

Since music is presentation of time, every great musical work opens a vista into the depths of history and into the breadth of the future that is our task. The musical work has not only its own time, but it also constantly preserves the memory of the entire history of music, whether it does so consciously or not. The musical work really brings the whole fullness of time to appearance, and it does so in a way that can be demonstrated. It therefore has an exact sense when we claim that the unity of time appears in music. Music transports us into the present, and that means into the truth of the whole of history. Inasmuch as music permits the unity of time to appear, it opens up as such the space of the spirit. In music, the spirit appears as event. To accomplish this is at once the task, and thus the essence, of music.

IS GOETHE'S THEORY OF COLORS SCIENCE?*

Gernot Böhme

Translated by Joseph Gray

I. Introduction

The ambivalence of scientific-technological progress has led in our century to a widespread criticism of science, especially of modern natural science.¹ Moreover, the conclusions derived from this criticism have been manifold. They range from a radical rejection of

* Translated from "Ist Goethes Farbenlehre Wissenschaft?" *Studia Leibnitiana* 9 (1977): 27-54.

Goethe's theory of colors is here revisited within the context of the question whether 'alternatives' to modern natural science are possible. To ensure comparability a rather weak criterion for scientificity is taken as a point of departure: science is systematic knowledge. Goethe's theory of colors is a systematization of the domain of color phenomena, including 'structural laws' and the principles governing the appearance of colors. The difference between Goethe's science and modern natural science is investigated through a direct confrontation of Goethe's polemics against Newton and Newton's *Opticks*. In particular these questions are treated: why Goethe's science does not include the idea of an endless progress of knowledge; and how intersubjectivity is warranted in a "perception science" like Goethe's. The conclusion of the paper is that Goethe's science contains a functional equivalent at each point where it deviates from modern natural science. So it is rather a question of social interest whether a science of this type will be developed in areas other than color phenomena.

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The following editions are quoted: 1) *Goethes Werke*, ed. by Erich Trunz, 14 vols. (Hamburg: Wegner, 1948-1964), quoted as (13,...) and (14,...). 2) Goethe, *Die Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft*, complete edition with commentary, ed. by d. Kuhn, R. Matthaei, G. Schmid, W. Troll, and L. Wolf, 22vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1747-), quoted as (Leopoldina...).

¹ For a recent survey, see Jerome R. Ravetz, "Criticisms of Science", in *Science, Technology and Society*, ed. by Ina Spiegel-Rösing and de Solla Price (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977).

science, as seen in the anti-science movement, to the demand for a maximally comprehensive science by society. Such criticism normally assumes that science simply is as it is, and that decisions are made about its benefit or harm to man only after it is put to use. Questions about a 'different' science are rarely raised, and remain tangential to a conceptual exposition. Thus, it comes as no surprise when the term 'scientific' is defined in the context of science as it presently exists. Whether or not sciences other than modern science are possible at all can scarcely be determined theoretically, but rather, perhaps, can be determined through the study of attempts at knowledge which in another era could lay claim to the status of science, such as the science of Plato,² or which, at least as a stumbling block within the history of modern science, proved themselves to be a possible candidate for an alternative science, as is the case with Goethe's theory of colors. Only on the basis of such studies will the demands for an 'alternative science' attain some degree of substantiation.

Is Goethe's theory of colors science? Clearly, this question will be answered negatively if one proceeds from a scientific theory oriented in modern physics with sharply outlined criteria for delimitation. However, in order to make possible any comparison at all, it is advisable to proceed from the most meager definition of science possible, so that we may point out step by step through analogous relationships the structures of a science which is clearly different from modern science.

We think of science in the most general sense as systematic knowledge. If we were to interpret this definition in such a way that knowledge must exist as a system of propositions in order to be valid as science, then Goethe's theory of colors would have dim prospects for gaining recognition as science. Goethe's theory of colors, however, does present a systematic order within a certain sphere of phenomena. We wish therefore to emphasize in a brief characterization of the theory those principles and laws according to which this order is developed. (II)

Doubts about the scientific quality of Goethe's theory of colors arise on the one side from the view that his theory purported to be an exclusive alternative to Newton's optical treatment of colors. Since, however, Newton's optical theory, which is solidly established as an integral part of modern science, cannot be called into question, Goethe appears to have little chance in this argument. In order to clarify this point, we must attempt to outline the main points in Goethe's polemics against Newton. (III)

From a different perspective, doubts are raised by the fact that

² S. G. Böhme, "Platons Theorie der exakten Wissenschaften", *Antike und Abendland* 22 (1976): 40-53.

Goethe's theory of colors did not establish any scientific tradition. Modern science distinguishes itself by forming a continuous process of research in which knowledge is accumulated. We therefore wish to investigate how Goethe's theory of colors is to be judged under the criterion of continuation, and in this respect, how continuation itself is to be judged as a criterion for science. (IV)

Finally, Goethe's theory of colors is regarded as a questionable scientific attempt because it enters into the realms of subjective perception. To be sure, it is precisely here that Goethe's theory of colors has attained results which have found the greatest recognition. These results proved that the regularity of color phenomena which had been regarded earlier as accidental optical illusions conform to law. Thus, it is all the more imperative to form an idea about the manner in which the intersubjectivity of knowledge, necessary for science in general, is to be secured in this sphere. (V)

II. Goethe's Theory of Colors as Systematic Knowledge

Goethe's theory of colors is divided into three parts, the didactic, the polemical, and the historical. The actual theory is presented in the didactic section, where it is polemically confronted with the Newtonian theory, and it is presented in its development from antiquity to the eighteenth century in the historical section.

In the didactic section color phenomena, distinguished according to their degree of stability, are treated as physiological, physical, and chemical colors; a theory for the emergence of colors is established; laws for the interrelationship of colors among themselves are developed according to certain principles; the sensuous-moral (*sinnlich-sittlich*) effect of colors is treated; and finally the relationship of the theory of colors to other sciences and to practice is formulated.

We will concentrate on the systematic features of the theory of colors.

a) Conditions for the Emergence of Colors

Goethe's description of color phenomena contains as a rule information on the kinds of conditions which must be present or must be produced so that a given color phenomenon can be perceived. He deals with information about the incidence of light, the characteristics of surfaces, the use of instruments, techniques of observation, and such things. This information deals with the *empirical* conditions for the emergence of color. Goethe then attempts to produce a general theory about those conditions for the emergence of color which vary from case to case. This general theory consists, briefly, of the following principle: Color arises when light and darkness are

mediated together through grey (*die Trübe*¹).

We see on the one side light, brightness, and on the other darkness; we bring grey between the two, and from this opposition, with the help of the conceived mediations, colors develop likewise as opposites...(13,368).

We see how Goethe attempts here to make a general formulation for that which appears under empirical conditions as light and dark surfaces, as milky liquid, smoke, etc. Moreover, the universal that results from the process of abstraction is itself of a phenomenal nature, and not objective (*gegenständlich*). As we see it, he thereby abstracts, on the one side, from the conditions imposed by his apparatus, and on the other side, from the physical conditions (light as a form of energy), and seeks the condition of color phenomena directly in the sphere of visible phenomenality. By light he does not mean an existing quantum, but visible brightness; by semitransparency not a semitransparent medium, but restriction in the field of vision; by darkness not the mere absence of light, but visible darkness.

Goethe places value on the idea that the conditions for color phenomena are themselves phenomena:

We become more familiar with certain essential conditions of phenomena From this point on, everything is gradually arranged under higher rules and laws which, however, are not revealed in words and hypotheses to our reason, but rather through phenomena to our senses. We call them original phenomena (*Urphänomene*)....(13, 367)

Light, darkness, and semitransparency are together an original phenomenon; that is, the original phenomenon of colors. They never appear isolated, but always exist in a mutual relationship to one another; by themselves they cannot even be perceived. In a very general sense, color is the manifestation of light, the act, or *energeia*, of light, as Goethe once said.³

Light appears in its most original, and thus purest state as yellow. "At first, light appears to us as a color which we call yellow" (13,366). Grey (*die Trübe*) appears in its most perfect or extreme form in white. "§147. The extreme degree of grey is white, the most indifferent, brightest, first, opaque occupation of space" (13, 362). The original manifestation of darkness is blue (13, 362). On the other hand, light and darkness possess their permanent representatives as surface colors in white and black. "§18. Black, as representative of darkness...white, as representative of light" (13, 332). One

³ "Colors are acts of light", states Goethe, but then adds, "acts and sufferings". Goethe's distance from the Platonic-Aristotelian ontology is expressed in this addendum. Being has in its appearance not only a more or less powerful efficacy, but also experiences an intensification through the 'distress' into which it falls. H. Schmitz made this point the crux of his Goethe interpretation (Hermann Schmitz, *Goethes Altersdenken* [Bonn: Bouvier, 1959], especially §§6,7).

must therefore say that light, darkness, and semitransparency are in themselves mere abstractions. They are contained in all color phenomena, and appear particularly in them. Their status as conditions for the emergence of color is thus not to be understood in terms of their previous existence, but as a transcendental or formal condition; they are to be understood as directions in which the essence of color can diverge so as to appear (light/darkness), and as the medium in which this diverging occurs. At play here is a more general principle: every phenomenon is the presentation of a unity in polar opposition:

§739. True observers of nature, no matter how differently they think, will agree with each other that everything which appears, which we encounter as a phenomenon, must indicate either an original bifurcation capable of union, or an original unity capable of bifurcation and indeed must manifest itself in this manner (13,488).

Appearance is always the emergence of the essence of something by means of polarization.⁴ The conditions of the phenomenon are the possible directions of its polarization and their mediation.

Presented in such an abstract fashion, that which we designated as the theory of the emergence of color must strike one as quite speculative. However, for one thing, we must keep in mind that we are dealing here with a model of theory building which is rich in tradition, and which has been very successful. Goethe himself refers to the theory of polarity in the area of electrical and magnetic phenomena (13,488); he could have also mentioned the theory of music, harmony, and rhythm in antiquity (Plato's *Philebus*). Furthermore, absolutely no speculative use is made of this theory, but rather we are shown in detail how light and darkness, as a rule made concrete through their representatives, white and black, cause colors to appear through semitransparency, that is, on semitransparent media. To be sure, the attempt to derive these phenomena from the conditions sometimes goes beyond their concrete representation, as for instance, when the origin of refracted colors is explained by postulating a secondary image (*Nebenbild*) which assumes the function of the semitransparency (Physical Colors, XV. Derivation of the indicated phenomena, esp. §238f).

b) The Laws of Color

In the passage already quoted dealing with the principle of the emergence of color, Goethe had shown that colors develop "likewise in opposition". This passage continues (§175; 13, 368): "The colors, however, point immediately and directly back to wholeness through

⁴ Highly similar reflections can be found in an early piece by Kant, namely, in the *Versuch, den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*. Here too, there is an attempt to make an in many ways observed polarity, or opposition of the real (*Real-Repugnantz*), as Kant says, a general principle of empirical reality.

their reciprocal relationship.” This statement already indicates what is developed in detail in the laws of color, that is, the dominance of polarity and totality over multiplicity. But most important is the notion that colors are what they are only in their interrelationship: one color is no color. The essence of color can be particularized only in a multiplicity, organized according to distinct laws, and color appears as a rule only as such a multiplicity. Pressed for a definition, Goethe states, “Color is law-like nature in relation to the sense of sight” (13, 324). We believe that a certain emphasis is placed on the word “law-like” (*gesetzmäßig*): Color is altogether only that optical appearance which stands with others in law-like interrelationship. Here Goethe is pointing to certain ‘stylizations’ which essentially determine phenomena of the senses, but which cannot be fully reproduced in their physical basis. In harmony, only those sounds are admitted as tones which fit with others in a systematic interrelationship. An example provided in music theory of antiquity, according to which tones exist in simple or “overdivisible” proportions [that is, $n:1$ or $(n+1):n$] even makes good sense physically, but as the *Well-tempered Clavier* shows, the musical stylization is not dependent upon it. The crucial point is, only that is valid as color which fits in a law-like fashion into the totality of color phenomena, just as only that is tone which has its systematic location within the structure of the scale.⁵

Goethe presents the totality of colors through their disposition within the color circle. This circle is a structure of high order. It is dominated by three principles of color relationship; polarity, intensification (*Steigerung*), and blending. Blue and yellow — those colors which appear first in darkness and light — represent their original polarity. Each can be intensified on its own, blue to violet, yellow to orange, in order to meet at a common point of culmination — Purple. The other principle of relationship, blending, produces green between yellow and blue; likewise, violet which lies between red and blue, and orange between red and yellow are to be viewed as their respective blending. These relationships are represented in the specific positions within the color circle: yellow, orange, purple, violet, blue, green, yellow. Likewise, the color combinations viewed as significant occur according to the order of their corresponding position within the color spectrum. Each pair of opposing colors can be regarded as harmonic, or as we would say, complementary color combinations. Regarded as a pair, they represent the complete totality —

⁵ We find a related interpretation by A. Speiser: “Just as in Music the constant series of tones is determined by the disjunct scale, a fact which actually makes music possible, the continuous color circle should be divided by the hexagon of colors red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet, and thus cause the multiplicity of colors to have a harmonious effect” (Andreas Speiser, “Goethes Farbenlehre”, in *Goethe und die Wissenschaft* [Frankfurt/M.: Klostermann, 1951], p. 86).

and this can be demonstrated through certain experiments involving reciprocal want and fulfillment. Each pair of colors, between which there is a mixed color, constitutes a 'characteristic' combination. Since of the six colors of the color circle only green is actually a mixed color, we get four characteristic color combinations: yellow/blue, yellow/purple, blue/purple, and orange/violet. Goethe treats as the final type of color combination, corresponding to the second in music theory, the so-called 'characterless' ones. They are the combinations in which two colors next to each other on the color circle are brought together, that is, colors that are related by intensification or inclusion (yellow against green, blue against green).

Goethe develops the color laws discussed here in his chapter on the sensuous-moral effects of colors. We have not treated these effects here, but rather the systematic interrelationship of colors on which their effects are based. The fact that Goethe proceeds from the sensuous-moral effects might well be due to a historically conditioned interest in the effects of colors in painting. Indeed, one could also present a theory of harmony from the perspective of the effects of intervals. Historically mathematical laws were the point of departure and not until the seventh century did music leave its place in the quadrivium (among the mathematical sciences), and enter the trivium at the side of rhetoric, which traditionally dealt with man's emotions and passions. The aspect of color theory bound by laws is capable of mathematical formulation, though with greater difficulty than is the case with music theory. To be sure, Goethe himself states that color theory does not belong "before the judgment seat of mathematics" (13, 328; 13, 484). Naturally, Goethe's rejection of Newton is associated with a restricted view of mathematics as an art of measurement, a quite understandable view for his time.

III. Goethe Verses Newton

Because of his polemic against Newton, Goethe's theory of colors represents a scandalous episode in the history of science. For his part, Goethe regarded the Newtonian theory of color as a scandal. And thus, the reaction today concerning the Goethean scandal is formulated with almost the same words as Goethe used to express his astonishment about Newton:⁶ "How could a mind so great, so all encompassing, be so wrong?" (13, 157, epilogue by C. F. von Weizsäcker). With such words we see that Goethe's mistakes are not regarded as incidental ones which every investigator makes, but that

⁶ Another example: "How would it be possible for one of the first mathematicians to use an approach so lacking in method..." (*Materialien*, 14, 175).

critics feel challenged to unravel them systematically and to determine a common source for them.

Goethe attempted to formulate the source of Newton's 'mistakes' in the psychological, or as he says, ethical area: he sees their basis in Newton's personality (see *Materialien zur Gesch. der Farbenlehre*, Leopoldina I, 6; 295ff). He places Newton among the scientific personalities who are avid attackers, and more disposed to theory than experiment. Goethe ascribes to him a particular firmness of character which manifests itself to his disadvantage in a tenacious clinging to preconceived opinions. As a second 'ethical' reason, Goethe adds a supposition which is known today as a methodological principle for the evaluation of theories. According to it, a theory is designated as progressive when it is not only problem solving, but also problem producing (Lakatos). Sensitive to this trait of modern science, Goethe states, "that perhaps Newton found such pleasure in his theory because it offered him new difficulties at each step of his experience" (*Materialien*...14, 176).

If one wanted to give a comparable 'ethical' basis for Goethe's mistakes, it would be derived not so much from his character, as from a difference in the sociological types of scientists represented by Goethe and Newton. While Goethe belongs to the type identified as a systematically working lover of nature, Newton must be counted among the scientific professionals. The first category consists in general of self-taught men who work empirically, collecting and classifying. They had a great significance for science all the way into the nineteenth century, up to about the time of Gregor Mendel.⁷ In our century, however, advances in science are expected only from the professionals. Characteristic for them is an education in science, a socialization based on theoretical and experimental norms. One can designate Newton as one of their first representatives. Goethe, however, was totally lacking in any kind of 'schooling' in mathematics and the natural sciences, and from this fact one might explain a number of instances where he did not understand what the present-day scientist views as "the clear meaning of the work and experiments of Newton" (13, 537, von Weizsäcker).

To be sure, this sociological classification would not explain the whole scandal involving Goethe's polemics against Newton. It would simply not do justice to Goethe's claim to be in competition with Newton — that is, to his systematic and theoretical approach. It therefore appears fitting to seek the root of the grievance precisely in

⁷ In a recent study, an attempt is made to explain Goethe's work in the natural sciences totally from the perspective of this kind of research which was so characteristic of the eighteenth century. See Manfred Kleinschneider, *Goethes Naturstudien* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1971).

Goethe's claim; to search for the cause of all of his mistakes in his belief that he indeed was dealing with the same subject matter as Newton and, if we conceive that he was, even in the same respect. Heisenberg uses this approach when he proposes a theory involving different levels of reality:

We can perhaps best describe the difference between the Goethean and Newtonian theory of colors if we state that they deal with two entirely different levels of reality.⁸

A. Speiser takes a similar view:

Goethe's theory of colors is not physics, not natural science, but a description of mental capabilities (*Seelenkräfte*)....A classification of his color theory then follows from itself. It belongs to the humanities...⁹

One is led to such an explanation if one recognizes, as one should, that the essential parts of Goethean color theory are contained in his treatment of psychical colors. But if we do this, we should not overlook Newton's very clear statement that he does not deal with this type of color phenomena. Thus, there should be no quarrel at all, as far as these phenomena are concerned. To be sure, Newton did concern himself with 'subjective' color phenomena — he experimented with afterimages to the point of endangering his eyesight, but he explicitly excludes them from his basic thesis that all colors are composed of homogeneous light:

All the colors in the universe which are made by light, and depend not on the Power of Imagination, are either the Colours of homogeneous Lights, or compounded of these...

Newton therefore distinguishes unmistakably between physical and psychical colors, but in addition, he also explains that his theory does not actually deal with colors, that is, sensations of color, but with the potential of light to arouse such sensations of color:

Definition. The homogeneous Light and Rays which appear red, or rather make Objects appear so, I call Rubrification or Red-making; those which make Objects appear yellow, green, blue, and violet, I call Yellow-making, Green-making, Blue-making, Violet-making, and so of the rest. And if at any time I speak of Light and Rays as coloured or endued with Colours, I would be understood to speak not philosophically and properly, but grossly, and accordingly to such Conceptions as vulgar People in seeing all these Experiments would be apt to frame. For the Rays to speak properly are not coloured. In them there is nothing else than a certain Power and Disposition to stir up a Sensation of this or that Colour. For as Sound in a

⁸ Werner Heisenberg, "Die Goethische und die Newtonsche Farbenlehre im Lichte der modernen Physik", in *Wandlungen in der Grundlagen der Naturwissenschaft*, 7th ed. Hirzel, 1947), p. 61.

⁹ Andreas Speiser, "Goethes Farbenlehre", in *Die mathematische Denkweise* (Zürich: Rascher, 1932), pp. 96-97.

Bell or musical String, or other sounding Body, is nothing but a trembling Motion, and in the Air nothing but that Motion propagated from the Object, and in the Sensorium 'tis a Sense of that Motion under the Form of Sound; so Colours in the Object are nothing but a Disposition to reflect this or that sort of Rays more copiously than the rest; in the Rays they are nothing but their Dispositions to propagate this or that Motion into the Sensorium, and in the Sensorium they are Sensations of those Motions under the Forms of Colours.¹⁰

Goethe by no means overlooked these passages.¹¹ We are therefore avoiding the real problem if we assume that Goethe wasn't dealing with the same things as Newton. Goethe wished rather to compete with Newton in the latter's special area, that is, in the area of physical colors. This is especially true for the 'refractive colors'. *Goethe formulated a theory to explain them which, in contrast to Newton's, was not restricted to these color phenomena, but ventured to treat all color phenomena in a unified fashion.* Only when we recognize that Goethe offered a theory of *all* color phenomena, including those treated by Newton, are we able to understand his so-called mistakes in a systematic manner. We can then show in each individual passage why Goethe had to interpret the Newtonian experiments differently; the so-called mistakes can be understood either as alternative interpretations (frequently artificial), ramifications of his own theory, systematic delusions, or finally, as instances where Goethe's theory genuinely fails. As far as we can tell, no one has attempted this tiresome task, and we do not wish to undertake it either. Instead, using Goethe's arguments against Newton, we shall attempt to characterize the broad differences between their theories.

Goethe and Newton are competitors because they offer two distinct theories for a phenomenon in need of explanation, that is, 'refractive colors' or color phenomena which appear regularly in connection with transparent media. The differences between the two theories are enormous; that they can be compared at all sometimes seems possible only because they both are supposed to offer explanations of the same phenomena.

First of all, we wish to discuss a difference between Goethe and Newton which in a way precedes their respective theories, namely, their different interests, and, related to this, the different relationship to practice contained in their theories. "For there is a great dif-

¹⁰ Isaac Newton, *Opticks* (New York: Dover, 1952), pp. 124-25. Quotations are from this edition.

¹¹ See the Polemical Section 596 and 456. In the latter passage, Goethe makes the very clever remark that Newton wanted to neutralize the difference between corpuscular and wave theory with his 'Definition' so that he subsequently could use the advantages of the wave theory for his analogy between the theories of color and harmony. Actually, Newton uses here the difference between dispositions and colors in order to explain the possibility of producing a color with a multiplicity of lights.

ference in the perspective from which we approach a science or branch of knowledge, and in the door through which we enter" (Goethe 13, 329-30). Newton undertook his studies in optics with the intention of improving the dioptric telescope. He was concerned with eliminating the bothersome colored fringes which appeared at the edges of objects observed through this instrument. His interest was thus not at all directed at the colors as such: they were a concern to him as blurs in an image which, to be sure, are then perceived subjectively as having color. We see here how Newton's basic premise regarding dioptrical color phenomena resulted from his interest in sharp images. The phenomena should be understood as manifestations of the diverse refrangibility of light: "Lights which differ in Colour, differ also in Degrees of Refrangibility" (Book I, Part I, Prop. I., Theor. I). This thesis, which makes color phenomena dependent upon a certain quality inherent in light, that is, 'refrangibility', is to be understood as the result of extensive experiments aimed at eliminating these color phenomena in the dioptric telescope through variation of the external conditions, for example, through changing the thickness of the glass, the size of the opening, the incidence of light, and the boundaries of light and darkness.¹² These experiments were unsuccessful. Newton became convinced that the colored borders in the dioptric telescope have their origin in a basic property of light exhibited by this instrument, and that therefore nothing could be done essentially to improve the situation.¹³ "The Perfection of Telescopes is impeded by the different Refrangibility of the Rays of Light" (Prof. VII, Theor. VI). Therefore, the only solution lay in constructing a telescope which did not involve the refraction of light. This consideration led Newton to the construction of the mirror telescope.

Newton thus became acquainted with colors as chromatic aberration — as a disturbance of optic images which should be eliminated; he found their cause in a property of light which is independent of external conditions. On the other hand, Goethe, as he explains it, "came to color theory from the direction of painting, from the perspective of the aesthetic coloring of surfaces" (13, 329). This different approach to color phenomena is indicative of a totally different view of the phenomena themselves. It is no longer a question of whether one can cause the color phenomena to disappear, but rather a question of their proper delineation, their basic interrelationship, and

¹² See Goethe, *Materialien*, 14, 146 and following pages.

¹³ It was a certain triumph for Goethe that this improvement was later accomplished. Newton was not yet aware of the dependency of the index of refraction on the refractive material, and thus the possibility of achromatic lenses and prisms lay beyond his conception.

their effects. For the point is not to see sharply, as in the case with Newton, but to see colors. If for the former, as Newton shows, the external conditions are relatively insignificant, they become basic to the latter. Precisely because colors are not properties of light, as Newton also states, the conditions of their emergence are for Goethe the main theme of the color theory.

Now that we have indicated the very different practical interests on the part of Newton and Goethe, let us turn to the difference in the two theories. One is easily inclined to set Goethe, the phenomenologist, against Newton, the modern scientist who works with conceptual models. The contraposition is incorrect to the extent that it is a special trait of Newtonian science to present the phenomena themselves in their orderly interrelationship without reference to conceptual models. This is the meaning of his '*hypotheses non fingo*'. Indeed, he begins his *Opticks* with a sentence in this vein: "My Design in this Book is not to explain the Properties of light by Hypotheses, but to propose and prove them by Reason and Experiments." Newton is therefore no less a phenomenologist than Goethe: to be sure, he hypothesizes about the corpuscular diffusion of light; however, it played no role in his treatment of color phenomena in the *Opticks*. Both forgo a statement regarding a causal mechanism through which color phenomena are produced; nevertheless, both give a general theory of these phenomena, Newton through a discussion of certain properties of light, and Goethe through a discussion of the conditions for the emergence of color phenomena.

Let us now characterize the differences between the two theories more closely. In this endeavor we might best start with a remarkable fact: while Newton states explicitly that his theory does not actually deal with colors, but with the capacity of light to simulate sensations of color in our senses, Goethe is aware of this statement and discusses it, but apart from taking it systematically into account!

Precisely this statement would certainly be suited to blunt the entire controversy between Goethe and Newton. After all, Goethe might say that Newton was simply treating the Powers and Dispositions of light, but that he himself was dealing with the Sensations of this or that Color. We believe, however that Goethe saw the situation quite differently. He attributed the separation of the Dispositions of Light from the Sensations in the Sensorium to that very Newtonian theory which he was disputing. If in his theory he thus refused to accept a role in the Cartesian scheme of *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, which clearly appears in Newton, then he was certainly more clear-sighted than his interpreters who today are all too quick in wanting to reconcile him with Newton concerning the distinction of objects or levels of reality. Their subject matter was the same —

the phenomenon of dioptrical colors which was in need of explanation — but their theories were different. Newton distinguishes, on the one hand, light with its properties, which have as such no unequivocal relationship to colors, and on the other hand, sensations of color which can be explained by means of the dispositions of light. The goal of this explanation is not a statement about a perception-oriented, physiological mechanism, but the construction of an ordered correlation between disposition of light and color perception. This could be stated as $e = (d_1, d_2, \dots, d_n)$, whereby “ e ” represents a variable for color perceptions, and “ d ” the various dispositions of light. Newton attempts to give such a psychophysical correlation in Prop. VI. Prob. II in the second part of his first book of *Opticks*.¹⁴ From the beginning, Goethe rejects the separation of the objective properties of light from the subjective perceptions. To be sure, the way he establishes his position is not satisfactory to someone trained in modern theory of science (*Wissenschaftstheorie*). Goethe uses the language of Neo-Platonic mysticism concerning the identity of light and eye (see the Introduction to Theory of Colors, 13, 324). This account, which ascribes the quality of light to the eye itself, implies theoretically that the perception of color arises from an interplay of light issuing from objects with light emanating from the eye. Goethe even refers to this theory which can be traced back to Plato:¹⁵ “However, it becomes more comprehensible if we maintain that in the eye there dwells a dormant light which is stimulated by the slightest cause from within or without” (13, 324).

Once one has stripped this doctrine of its intuitive associations, as Goethe did, and if one does not regard light as something objective which is somehow propagated, then one is left with the thesis that colors — from a Cartesian point of view — belong neither to the category of *res extensa* nor in the category of *res cogitans*; they are neither objective nor subjective. Instead, what *does* exist are objective and subjective conditions for their emergence. In this theory Goethe attempts to state these conditions in a systematic manner.

Now that we have followed Goethe's theory in its development, let us further pursue the differences as seen in Goethe's objections to Newton's theory. The latter explains color phenomena in transparent media through the fact that light possesses properties of varying dispositions. He identifies the disposition responsible for color

¹⁴ Newton's calculation of mixed colors presupposes the thesis that individual colors in the spectrum are arranged according to the relationship of harmonic intervals. This thesis shows how strongly Newton was indebted to certain speculative traditions — for the corresponding measurements he was forced to enlist the aid of a helper “whose Eyes for distinguishing Colours were more critical than mine” (*Opticks*, p. 126).

¹⁵ *Theaetetus* 156-57, *Timaeus* 67-68.

phenomena as refrangibility. Consequently, it is mainly the 'hypothesis of refrangibility' which Goethe attacks in his polemics. For Goethe, light is a unitary entity; differentiations appear simply with differing conditions; in particular, refraction varies only when the media causing the refraction differ. Here we have established two of the main points in Goethe's polemic against Newton: Goethe maintains that Newton regards the simple as composite in nature, and the composite as simple, and that, unlike Goethe, Newton does not concede "value and dignity" to the conditions (13, 528). We now proceed to set out the further differences apparent between Goethe's and Newton's theories.

(1) Every science can be characterized by what is assumed to be 'simple' within it. In Newton's theory, homogeneous light is simple, and by homogeneous he means light which possesses only one refrangibility, and correspondingly, has merely a simple disposition to being perceived as color. For Goethe, colorless sunlight is simple, not a simple element contained in a composite, but a simple condition for the emergence of color. Colors themselves are not specifications of light, but appear at borders through the restriction of light by the contrary conditions of darkness (mediated through semitransparency.) According to Goethe's theory, the multiplicity of colors is not in the least controlled by the law of specification, but rather by the law of polarity.¹⁶ That means, however, for Goethe that there are, strictly speaking, no individual colors: they always appear at least as pairs in polar opposition.

(2) Since Newton establishes the basis for explaining color phenomena in the characteristics of light, he attempts in his experiments to exclude as far as possible the influence of 'conditions'. Goethe censures these experiments consistently for their very neglect of conditions (such as size of image, distance, incidence of light, conditions of brightness, etc.), for it is precisely these conditions which in his theory are the bases of explanation. In connection with this, Goethe frequently reproaches Newton for regarding the prismatic image as something complete, or finished, instead of something in the process of becoming. To be sure, this reproach is frequently unjustified, but it does hit at the crux of the problem. For Newton colors themselves (or more precisely, dispositions of color) are invariable, and are only sorted out in various ways by 'conditions', for example, prisms, lenses, or screens which are set up. For Goethe, however, there are no

¹⁶ Refer to § 27 of the Polemical Section. Goethe states here that there are at least two ways in which a difference can arise out of a unity: "First, that an opposition emerges, whereby the unity is manifested towards two sides...; second, that the development of that which has been differentiated occurs constantly in a series" (Leopoldina I, 5; 11).

colors until the last condition is determined. He thus rejects the synthesis of white from the spectrum because no finished image exists in advance of the second prism.¹⁷

(3) Closely connected with Goethe's reproach that Newton neglects the significance of the conditions in his experiments are all the arguments against the idealizing method of Newton. In the descriptions of experiments, Newton as a rule specifies the external conditions very precisely, but without justifying the choice of these particular conditions in any detail. Goethe recognizes that in each instance they are precisely the conditions under which the phenomenon Newton intends to treat can be shown in the best and neatest fashion. Goethe censures this approach as one which shows Newton grasping at unique cases. Since Newton's purpose is to determine certain properties of light he naturally chooses the conditions under which these properties can be understood most clearly, and this implies the least possible interference by other factors. For Goethe, who is concerned with the relationship between conditions and phenomena, it is totally absurd to choose fixed conditions for an experiment in order to receive 'pure' phenomena. To the contrary, an experiment for him consists in producing a series of phenomena by varying the conditions.¹⁸ Goethe regards it as the epitome of an unscientific approach when Newton in several instances 'corrects' the phenomena which his experiments demonstrate to him.¹⁹ In cases where the experiment does not exactly show what his theory maintains, Newton conjectures, for example, that the light he employed was not entirely homogeneous, that the surfaces of the glass he used were not in the best condition, etc. This procedure of exhaustion by assuming sources of error — characteristic of modern natural science — strikes Goethe as quite absurd: how is theory to explain phenomena if one manipulates the phenomena in such a way that they fit the theory?

(4) This brings us to a fourth difference which Goethe does not comment on explicitly. In his *Principia Mathematica* Newton draws a distinction between true phenomena and phenomena as they merely manifest themselves (*verum et apparens*). For Goethe who inves-

¹⁷ Refer to Polemical Sections §143, §544, Didactic Section §352. For Goethe, white light is not dispersed and synthesized again; rather, the two established conditions neutralize each other in their result.

¹⁸ "In order to be certain, we have reproduced this apparatus of prototypes to superfluous extremes. This is what distinguishes the experimenter from one who looks astonished at incidental phenomena as if they were unrelated occurrences. In contrast, Newton always seeks to keep his followers bound to set conditions because different conditions are not favorable to his view" (Polemical Section §74, Leopoldina I, 5, 27).

¹⁹ See, for example, the Polemical Section §§178, 438-44.

tigates 'nature' in the sense of 'what is given', all phenomena are in principle coordinate. This coordination requires, however, for its part, a sequence of phenomena: there are the simplest phenomena and then there is a first appearance of phenomena. Goethe reproaches Newton for not heeding this 'natural' order. Instead, Newton goes in *medias res* and begins his *Opticks* with the experiments which are characteristic for his theory.²⁰

(5) The above has its basis in the fact that Newton wants to 'prove' his theorems with his experiments. Goethe maintains, to the contrary, "actually nothing can be proven by means of experiences and experiments" (Theory of Color, Polemical Section, Leopoldina I, I, 5: 12), and he is certainly justified to some extent in this assertion. A special investigation would be needed to understand what Newton actually meant by such proofs. It is certain that in contrast to Goethe, who endeavors to present his entire experience with colors in his theory of color, Newton uses only a very few selected experiments. Moreover, they clearly do not serve to collect data, but are conceived step-by-step as *experimenta crucis* in the presentation of his theory. As far as Goethe is concerned, this procedure deals in stereotypes and lacks a basis in experience; for him Newton was a mathematician who strove in monomaniacal fashion to establish his theories, and who stood far removed from experience.

(6) Let us mention one more thesis which helps to distinguish Goethe's science from Newton's, one which Goethe himself was not able to develop properly. An essential feature of Goethe's theory of colors is a history of the theory of color. Goethe maintains "that the history of science is science itself" (13, 319).

Looking back, if we review the points which Goethe uses to set himself apart from Newton, it becomes evident that he focuses sharply on traits in Newton which are characteristic features of modern natural science: idealization, exhaustion, elementarism, the hypothetically deductive character of theories, the theoretical preformation of phenomena, Cartesianism, and ahistoricity. We have attempted to show how, in the polemic against this concept of science, a quite different view emerges with Goethe, and that as each attempts to explain certain phenomena, a genuine competition of theories arises. At this point, we are constrained to postpone the question about the outcome of this competition — the question about the truth of the theories — for we regard it as our most urgent task to first make the solution of this problem as difficult as possible.

²⁰ See the Polemical Section §§14, 15. According to Goethe the investigation of refracted colors should begin with plane-parallel procedures.

If we should add a preliminary commentary to this, it would be the following: Doubtless Goethe is able to explain very well 'in his manner' a great multiplicity of phenomena in the area of refractive colors. His theory really seems to fail with precisely those experiments which Newton constructed especially for the proof of his 'hypothesis of diverse refrangibility', for example, with the evidence of different focal distances of a lens in varying, monochromatic light (*Opticks*, Book I, Part I, Exper. 2). Newton shows that sharp images result from black lines on a background of diverse colors in varying distances from the lens; Goethe, however, must take his refuge in *ad hoc* hypotheses dealing with contrastive effects.²¹ Another typical example of the failure of Goethean theory is provided by Newton's very fine experiment on the 'diverse reflexibility' of lights. What Newton calls 'diverse reflexibility' (see *Opticks*, Book I, Part I, Def. 3) is basically only a consequence of diverse refrangibility: the angle of incidence at which refraction changes into total reflection varies according to the light. In dealing with the corresponding experiment of Newton, Goethe restricts himself to polemics, without attempting to give an explanation.²² Another group of experiments where Goethe's theory is visibly inferior consists of those which Newton expressly constructed 'to refute Goethe', that is, the ones in which Newton systematically excludes an influence of external conditions. As an example, let us mention the experiment with which Newton claims to refute the "Goethean", actually — as Goethe himself knows — the very old thesis that the colors of refraction appear only on the borders of light and darkness (Book I, Part II, Exp. I). Newton shows in this experiment, by introducing an obstacle in a packet of rays, that individual colors, consisting of an image of refraction produced by the obstacle, can be screened out. At the same time, however, the colors which do appear are totally independent of the obstacle. Goethe cannot understand this experiment at all, much less interpret it in a reasonable manner; he simply makes the trivial observation that an image of refraction (a colored border) again arises at the shadow of the obstacle.²³ Finally, it should be pointed out that he foundered on one thoroughly 'natural' phenomenon: as far as we know, he did not succeed, within the context of his theory, in offering a convincing explanation of the rainbow.²⁴

In developing his theory, Newton clearly moved from the original-

²¹ Polemical Section §70 and following paragraphs.

²² Newton, *Opticks*, Book I, Part I, Exp. 9; Goethe, Polemical Section §190 and following paragraphs.

²³ Polemical Section §325 and following paragraphs, esp. §360.

²⁴ Speiser also shares this view; see *Goethe und die Wissenschaft*, pp. 90f.

ly given phenomenon in need of explanation (chromatic aberration) to the experimental presentation of phenomena which 'only' his theory would fit. As a counterbalance on Goethe's side, we would have to mention again the psysiological colors. The Newtonian theory, for its part, offers no explanation for them. In order to highlight this counterbalance more effectively, it must be said that Newton essentially does not, and cannot, achieve his goal of explaining color phenomena produced by light. For the activity of perceiving is always stamped upon that which is perceived; a stylization is produced which cannot be derived solely from the objective cause of perception. The weakness of Newton's theory is thus most clearly evident in his 'psychophysical law', the law about the synthesis of colors from the colors of the spectrum, through which he attributes some kind of vaguely felt harmony of color relationships to the dispositions of light.²⁵

The theories of Newton and Goethe are sparked by the very same phenomenon in need of explanation. They diverge more and more from each other as they are worked out, as each produces or searches for its own distinctive phenomena. From this perspective, it is clear that one can solve the conflict between the two retrospectively by restricting each to those phenomena peculiar to it. In this way, Newton's theory is physics and deals with the objective properties of light; Goethe's theory is 'science of perception'²⁶ and deals with laws of seeing. With this approach we must naturally suppress, on Newton's side, the 'psychophysical' law, and on Goethe's side, his claim to have explained the objective phenomenon of chromatic aberration.

IV. Unrestricted Accumulation of Knowledge

Now is Goethe's theory of colors to be judged under the criterion of accumulation of knowledge? Goethe himself saw his work as well suited for continuation; he expressly desired to have followers. To a certain extent he found them, for example, in Runge, who expanded the color circle into a sphere using the value of black. And yet, the theory of colors has not been granted restrictedly cumulative import, as apparently has been the case with the rest of natural science.

But many (for example, Peirce), have regarded it as a characteristic of science that a body of knowledge is capable of unlimited continuation. Can we agree with this? Surely, it could happen that the knowledge associated with a certain subject area can be exhausted in a finite number of steps. It is becoming clear that physics, in its

²⁵ Book I, Part II, Prop. VI, Prob. II; also see footnote 14.

²⁶ We borrow this term from F. J. Zucker.

basic principles, is now capable of being completed. But this would not mean that the empirical side is necessarily finite. Indeed, we assume that it is not, first, because of the infinite complexity of the contingent aspects, and second, because we assume an infinite number of technically producible effects. Naturally, doubts can be raised about both points. The connection of the actual with the infinite is the attempt to distinguish it from the determinateness of the possible. Now, it is probably true that we do not grasp something actual by specifying a finitely large number of determinations. But we don't need to draw the conclusion that we therefore would require an infinitely large number of determinations. For the "infinity" of the actual could indeed also be interpreted as indeterminateness. Conversely, one can also attempt to abandon the individuality of the actual (as in certain types of statistics; compare also in this regard the production and destruction of particles in modern physics). To say that the actual is infinitely complex seems more than anything else to be an emphatic statement about its high degree of complexity. It is also not a self-evident thesis that one can produce technologically any number of new effects. A presumed finite number of natural basic forces would indicate otherwise. Is one supposed to be able to produce "incalculable" effects with them? This would amount to a highly metaphysical thesis involving a kind of technological emergentism. Such reflections make it very doubtful that one can grant validity to the notion of infinite progression as a criterion of science.

Let us ask again where this demand for endless progression comes from. It appears to have its origin in Kant. According to him, perceptions belong to experiences insofar as they can be integrated into a unity. It is precisely the possibility of their connection which makes them objective — in this manner they can be distinguished, for example, from dreams and hallucinations. (Clearly, one must take into account here the intersubjective connection.)

The principles which establish this unity with Kant are of the kind that require continuation:

- a) The integration of the real according to space and time requires an extension of the experience to infinite space and infinite time (quantity).
- b) The division of the real requires an infinite continuation of the search for "elementary" building blocks (quality, reality).
- c) The givenness of the real as an effect requires an infinite continuation in the search for its causes (relation).
- d) The determinateness of the real with respect to its existence requires an infinite continuation in the search for conditions of phenomenal existence (modality).

What makes experience a systematic unity are the cosmological ideas which present the world as a totality of given phenomena, and which in their regulative use require an infinite continuation of the research process (understood here as the obtaining of information).

In such a context Kant describes science of experience as a kind of *historia naturalis* which has the mission of recording the totality of possible facts and of arranging these into a "historical", or more appropriately, a cosmological system. The task of natural science is thus not exhausted for Kant in the obtaining of basic laws; its object is not only

"nature in its formal meaning", but also in its material meaning, namely, "as the embodiment of all things, insofar as they can be objects of our senses, and thus also of our experience. What is in view here is the totality of all phenomena, that is, the world of the senses...." (*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, Vorrede A III)

Once we have recognized the origin of the requirement for an infinite progression of knowledge in connection with an extensional relation of nature, it becomes doubtful whether this requirement can still be mandatory for modern natural science. Independent of this question, we can say at any rate that Goethe's interest was not, and perhaps could not be directed towards such an extensional relation.

In this regard, we must not be misled by the fact that Goethe himself, as perhaps all the eighteenth century, was interested in an extensive and comprehensive collection of phenomena. But this is by no means to imply that an extensional relation of phenomena was being sought. For example, the purpose here might be directed towards classification, that is, towards extensional collection without the extensional relation. In contrast to this, the principles of natural science which Kant describes are directed towards the network of relations constituting nature, space, time, causality, and the existential conditionality of phenomena. To a certain extent, this last principle integrates the others into one. In relation to their existence, the phenomena are dependent one upon the other, and relate one to another. Goethe is not in the least interested in such a relationship. He inquires rather about the following:

1. The conditions for the appearance of phenomena. These conditions, however, are not sought in other phenomena, at least not in those of the same order.
2. The relationship of phenomena — not about their relation in terms of existence, but about their structural relationship.

V. Intersubjectivity

Any science which operates empirically will have to show how it ascertains its object. Operational rules must be given so that we may be certain we are dealing with the object of that science. One might say that through this procedure the object itself is defined in an operational sense. This appears to be the case especially in the natural sciences which operate by means of measurement: temperature is that which we comprehend thermometrically; inert mass is that which we determine as the constant property of a body through experiments with acceleration and deceleration.

To begin with, Goethe gives a wealth of empirical rules for producing color. He is concerned with describing his experiments. From case to case, these descriptions support the intersubjective confirmation of the phenomenon of color. The character of intersubjectivity deserves some attention here, because it is usually regarded as mandatory for a scientific approach.

Goethe distinguishes between subjective and objective color phenomena; however, in enumerating the rules by which the phenomena are affirmed, he assures intersubjectivity for both types. To be sure, from the perspective of physics, all of the Goethean colors would have to be designated as subjective. Goethe always deals with that which we as human beings see as color, and not, for example, with the constituents of light as determined by their wave length. There is, indeed, a substantial difference here. For example, light mixed from two complementary colors (which therefore physically contains only two wave lengths) is seen as colorless in the same way as light mixed from all colors. What Goethe designates as colors are always the color phenomena which are seen. Among them he still distinguishes in a meaningful way between subjective and objective colors. Objective colors are those which are encountered in objects and with which objects can be illuminated, that is, primarily, chemical, and in part, physical colors. Subjective colors are those which either are produced only in the eye of the observer (for example, when we look through a prism), or by the capability of the eye, as in the case with the physiological colors. In both instances, the color which one sees cannot be captured anywhere with a screen. For both types of color phenomena Goethe assures intersubjectivity by giving the conditions of the experiment. Thereby the phenomenon first becomes one that can be reproduced. Only rarely does Goethe mention examples which are contingent or unique as a personal experience, either in his life or in someone else's. Consequently, the claim is made that different scientists must be able to agree about phenomena. This agreement, to be sure, always takes place at the primary level, that is,

by seeing. No empirical research can do without agreement at the primary level, but in contrast to Goethe, it reduces the concrete wealth of phenomena to a few elementary, alternative determinations, for example, to the swing of a needle to the right or left. These elementary alternatives are generally so chosen that one cannot argue about them. The whole process of coming to an understanding is thus shifted to the relationship of elementary occurrences and phenomena which must be established by argumentation. (An example would be the response of a Geiger counter as an elementary occurrence, and the decay of the radium atom as a phenomenon.) With Goethe, the wealth of phenomena is not reduced, and the point of agreement remains whether one sees or does not see a certain given phenomenon, for example, the blue coloring of a shadow. The expected intersubjectivity is, to be sure, thus burdened with greater uncertainty than is the case with the other modern natural sciences; however, it does not appear to be basically of a different kind.

Closer consideration should perhaps be given to one difference. This is related to the fact that Goethe is basically interested in what the modern natural scientist would call subjective phenomena. That which we previously called reduction to elementary occurrences is, as a rule, a procedure in modern science by which we guarantee objectivity, in that we can leave it to an apparatus to decide whether a phenomenon is present or not. Naturally, in the final analysis, a human being must determine if an apparatus has registered or not. However, what is determined, seen, or heard in the process can be a phenomenon of quite a different kind from that which is being investigated. In this case, the sensitivity of the apparatus becomes relevant to the level of phenomena in which we are interested; for *this* realm of phenomena, the sensitivity of the human being is excluded from the experiment. The inner organization of the apparatus, not that of the human being, therefore becomes the criterion for the appearance of a phenomenon.

This step can be viewed in two different ways. First, we can say that in this manner a phenomenon is registered which is objective; that is, we exclude in this manner that which originates *only* from the inner organization of the human organs of perception. This point of view, which would eliminate subjective participation as illusion (psysiological colors as optical illusion), is problematic because it registers as a phenomenon that which appears to the human being, and yet leaves it to the apparatus to decide what the true phenomenon is. (We hold to "color" as a phenomenon, and allow an apparatus to decide if a color is present, although the apparatus only responds to impulses of energy in a given frequency.)

Second, we can say that in this procedure we no longer regard the

phenomenon in question to be color, but rather, the electromagnetic oscillations which are registered. Thus, the sensation of color becomes a mere detector of such an oscillation, and a quite uncertain one at that. For what is sensed as having color must first be reduced to a considerable degree in order to have any validity as a detector of the phenomenon in question.

In order to clarify this matter, we should perhaps distinguish here between a phenomenon (or better, an effect) as the subject matter of physics and a phenomenon as something affecting the senses. Physics secures its objectivity by granting validity only to those phenomena which correlate with other objects; its subject matter is indeed established by the possibility of such a correlation. Causality is therefore a requirement for this realm of objects. Things are quite different with the sensuous phenomena. Their phenomenality is not seen in relation to another object, but in relation to the perceiving subject. This relationship, however, should not be regarded as causal. For we cannot distinguish here between two conditions, as is the case in physics between the physical object and the registered apparatus. The sensuous phenomenon is at once object and representation. However, if we want to call the physical object the cause of the sensuous phenomenon (oscillations for color), then the condition of the subject, the sensation of color, is not to be understood as an effect, but at most as a response to a cause (colored shadows, evoked colors). If we therefore wish to construct a science, that is, a systematic body of knowledge, dealing with the realm of sensuous phenomena, then the principle of causality cannot be used as a general model. It is rather a question, on the one hand, of inquiring into the ordered conditions necessary for the appearance of the phenomena to be investigated, and on the other hand, of seeking their orderly relationship with one another.

VI. Conclusion

Our presentation should have made it clear that we have some justification for designating Goethe's theory of colors as science. It is an attempt to gain knowledge which proceeds in a methodical manner, which aims at a systematic ordering of an objective realm, which allows its phenomena to be derived from principles, and which states laws governing the relationship between them. To be sure, this science differs in many respects from the other modern natural sciences: it does not ensure the intersubjectivity of its data through instrumental verification; its explanations are not causal in nature; it does not anticipate an infinite amount of potential knowledge

through which it could be continued.

Nevertheless, in all points where Goethe's science diverges from the basically modern natural sciences, an analogous structure, a functional equivalent can be noted. A linguistically ordered understanding about sense perception corresponds to the identification of an object through the regulated use of an apparatus.²⁷ The varying of conditions and the thorough examination of all which appears as concrete in the natural order of phenomena correspond to the establishment of fixed conditions and variations in parameter, as is proper for an hypothesis. A law which demonstrates the structural relationship between phenomena corresponds to a law which demonstrates the functional relationship of quantitative data. An explanation which states the inducement of the emergence of phenomena by means of polarization corresponds to an explanation which establishes cause and effect. The theoretical unity of the original phenomenon corresponds to the theoretical establishment of a unity of given data by reducing them to their underlying entities (atoms, molecules). If it thus appears problematic from the standpoint of a modern scientist to use the terms 'data', 'experimental method', 'law', 'explanation', or 'theory' in reference to Goethe, we can nevertheless find in his science an equivalent for all of these.²⁸

We have at least indicated that it is not absurd to ask about alternatives to modern natural science. Whether or not alternatives with a Goethean imprint will serve a useful purpose is not yet certain.

If Goethe's theory of colors did not establish itself as a science, this does not appear to us to be one of its many weaknesses, as were exhibited especially in the polemics against Newton. We find the main reason it remained a historically and personally isolated segment of scientific endeavor was because of the interest guiding the scientific investigation. This was aesthetic in nature; above all, Goethe hoped to accomplish something for painting with his theory of colors. Indeed, it has always been the painters who were interested in Goethe's theory of colors — although certainly not in the scientific side of it. A special question would be why painters are not interested in a *theory* of color phenomena; the fact is, at any rate, that for ages certain rules of thumb and practical pointers have sufficed for them. If Goethe's theory of colors were to gain relevance today, it would have to emerge (through a reformulation with the help of modern mathematics) in a different context of practically defined

²⁷ Agreement about sense perception presupposes both rules of language and agreed upon conventions concerning 'normal sight'.

²⁸ In connection with this comparison, see Arthur C. Zajonc, "Goethe's Theory of Color and Scientific Intuition", in *American Journal of Physics* 44 (April, 1976): 327-33, esp. the table on p. 331.

concerns.

These concerns might arise if the need were felt for a science of perception, perhaps for the purpose of constructing a 'humane' environment. Interest in a science of this kind could always occur if the concern were not only nature as a realm of possible manipulation, but at the same time, the effective role of man in nature, and if the concern were not only the experiences of man with nature, but also the experience of one's self in one's relation to nature.

TRANSLATION NOTE

ⁱ The rendering of "*die Trübe*" as grey follows the 1820 trans. of Goethe's *Farbelehre* into English by Charles Eastlake. To be noted is that, in its wide range of ordinary usages, the term seems to carry with it no clear connotation of color. Within the present context, "dimness", "opagueness", "semi-transparency", or "cloudiness" seem possible alternatives, no one of these, however, seems wholly adequate to Goethe's intention.

Reviews
and
Review Articles

GEORG HENRIK VON WRIGHT
ON "EXPLANATION" AND "UNDERSTANDING"*

(A Review Article)

Albrecht Wellmer

Translated by Frederick S. Gardiner

It is a well known fact that within analytic philosophy a position critical of the scientistic program¹ of logical empiricism or analytic philosophy of science has developed since the fifties.¹ The critique was directed primarily against two closely related kinds of reductionism characteristic of the analytic philosophy of science: a *material* reductionism and a *formal* reductionism. A *material* type of reductionism is represented by the physicalistic interpretation of the scientistic program, while the attempts at a logico-*methodological* foundation of scientific monism represents a *formal* type of reductionism. The critique of both of these forms of reductionism, as it has been developed within analytic philosophy of language, has to a considerable extent been inspired in its presuppositions and forms of inquiry by Wittgenstein's later philosophy. The discussions have centered in particular on the questions of the logical grammar of "person-action-languages", (as opposed to physical thing-event-languages), and of the logico-methodological character of the *explanations* of actions. If we follow von Wright and call the proponents of the scientistic *program* "causalists", and its ordinary language critics "intentionalists",² then, to oversimplify greatly, it can be said

* Translated from "Georg Henrik von Wright über 'Erklären' und 'Verstehen'", *Philosophische Rundschau* 26/1-2 (1979): 1-27.

¹ In the late fifties and early sixties, a number of important publications appeared within a few years of each other. In these publications representatives of language analysis called in question various aspects of the "naturalistic" interpretations and explanations of intentional action dominant in the analytic theory of science. The publications particularly worthy of mention are: G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford, 1957); P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London, 1958); St. Hampshire, *Thought and Action* (New York, 1959); A. I. Melden, *Free Action* (London, 1961). From the viewpoint of the theory of science the following works should also be mentioned: W. H. Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (Oxford, 1957); Charles Taylor, *The Explanation of Behavior* (London, 1964).

that the "intentionalists" maintain the irreducibility of both intentional action to observable behavior, and of explanations of actions to deductive-nomological causal explanations. One could say that the intentionalist position attempts by means of linguistic analysis to reformulate and make precise forms of inquiry and positions familiar for some time now from the context of discussion in continental philosophy; the philosophical psychology of ordinary language philosophy, its analyses of the *Lebenswelt*, and its analyses of intentionality can all be understood as language analysis counterparts of phenomenological analyses of consciousness and of the *Lebenswelt* (Brentano, Husserl, Schütz). With respect to its consequences for the philosophy of science, the intentionalist position amounts to the rehabilitation of the distinction between sciences concerned with the understanding of meaning, and those concerned with causal explanation — a distinction already postulated in the previous century by proponents of a hermeneutical theory of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (Droysen, Dilthey).

The logical empiricists had psychologized the problem of "understanding", thereby banning it, as it were, to the outer court of logico-methodological analysis. The merit of the ordinary language critics consists to no small part in the fact that they rescinded this curtailment of the problem of understanding, and made the *logico-methodological* meaning of a distinction between the causal-explanatory and meaning-explanatory methods of procedure the object of analysis. G. H. von Wright's works on the logical structure of causal explanations and the explanation of action, in particular his book *Explanation and Understanding* (hereafter EaU), which was already published in 1971, represent in this context certainly the most highly elaborated attempt at establishing the intentionalist position in the sense of a logical and methodological dualism between the natural and the social sciences. Von Wright makes a systematic claim in the following sense: On the basis of an alternative explanatory model (the so-called "practical syllogism"), he first gives a precise meaning to the ordinary language critique of causalist models of the explanation of action; he then tries to demonstrate that the practical syllogism represents the social-scientific equivalent of the subsumption-theoretical ("deductive-nomological") model of explanation valid in the natural sciences. Moreover, von Wright also <provides> a reconstruction of the logical structure of causal analyses and explanations on the basis of an analysis of conditionship relations. Finally, he links the concept of causality with the concept of action by means of an analysis attempting to show that the ability to act is logically prior to the causal interpretation of the world, and that therefore the concept of action is prior in a certain sense to the concept of causality. This is von Wright's version of the priority of the *Lebenswelt* to a physical description of the world. One could say that von Wright's approach summarizes and connects two different lines of discussion in analytical philosophy. I am thinking, on the one hand, of the discussion of the problem of causality in connection with the problem of <the logical character> of lawlike statements and the problem of counter-factual conditionals, and of the discussion of the problem of intentionality and action, on the other. In addition, von Wright refers explicitly to the traditions of a "hermeneutical" and "dialectical" theory of science; he tries to <reformulate> their critique of positivism within the framework of an intentionalist position purified through linguistic analysis, and to build a dualistic conception of scientific theory upon this intentionalist

critique of positivism. Von Wright's EaU is therefore also an important contribution from the side of analytic philosophy to the process of mediation between "continental" and analytical philosophy, a process that only recently has brought these two alienated philosophical traditions into mutually productive relationship.

In the following I would like to elaborate upon von Wright's above-sketched attempt to establish a viable logical and methodological distinction between the historical and social sciences based on "understanding", on the one hand, and the natural sciences based on causal analysis, on the other. As indicated above, von Wright's attempt is based upon a logical analysis of causal explanation and of the explanation of action as well as upon an analysis of the conceptual relationship between causality and action. Thus the subject matter of EaU will occupy the center of my exposition; I shall not discuss those other works of von Wright, which deal in some more formal way with the logic of action and time or with deontic and modal logic.

Corresponding to the arrangement of EaU, I would like to discuss four different topics: (1) von Wright's analysis of causal conditionship relations; (2) the relation between the concept of cause and the concept of action; (3) the logic of explanations of actions; and (4) von Wright's reflections on the logic of historical and social-scientific explanations.

I. The Analysis of Causal Conditionship Relations

I would like to take up von Wright's analysis of causal conditionship relations from a very general point of view. Von Wright presupposes the conceptual framework of this analysis in his "actionist" interpretation of the concept of causality. Hence, I consider it of importance to clarify the status of some of the assumptions upon which his considerations are based.

Von Wright bases his analysis of causal conditionship relations upon a "*Tractatus*-model" of the world. In other words, he assumes that the state of the world at any given point in time can be described by means of a conjunction of elementary states logically independent of each other (EaU, 43-44). These elementary states are to be conceived of as generic, which means that they can be said to obtain or not obtain on givenⁱⁱⁱ occasions or at given spatio-temporal locations. The fact that they are logically independent of each other means that any combination of elementary states is logically possible "on any given occasion". For the purpose of an analysis of causal conditionship relations, von Wright has developed a tense- and model-logical calculus² based on this logico-atomistic model. I do not wish to go into this here. In EaU he restricts himself essentially to a quasi-formal method of exposition: he explicates the logical structure of causal conditionship relations by means of "topological trees" meant to represent the respective fragments of a possible "history" of the world.^{iv} With the help of this expository method, von Wright achieves an unusually differentiated illumination of the logical structure of various types of causal conditionship relations and the corresponding types of explanation.

² See in particular Georg Henrik von Wright, *Causality and Determinism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), Pt. 1 (cited hereafter as CaD).

I shall not go further into von Wright's particular analyses here. Instead, I would like to point out some problems in his exposition that are connected with the assumption of a "*Tractatus*-world" whose "ontological building-bricks" (EaU, 45) are states of affairs. I think it is important to clarify the exact meaning and methodological status of this assumption further than von Wright has done in EaU. In the Woodbridge Lectures, *Causality and Determinism* (CaD), he has given some additional clarifications, and there he explains (CaD, 55-56) why "the world must to some degree approximate to the model of logical atomism", if a concept of "nomic causality" is to be possible. He states:

It must be possible for us to recognize...conceptually and verificationally separable instantiations of generic states of affairs. The states, moreover, must be such that the verification of the fact that one of them obtains or does not obtain on any given occasion does not by itself settle the question whether another one of them obtains or not on that same occasion. This is a requirement of logical independence.

For the "generic states of affairs" that appear in specific causal analyses, a postulate of mutual logical independence must in fact be valid, at least in a certain sense. But it by no means appears immediately apparent to me just what this sense is. If we take into account the objections that Wittgenstein himself already raised against the logical atomism of the *Tractatus*,³ then it seems obvious that the postulate of logical atomism can be maintained only in a restricted sense.^{3a} But even if this is granted, a further problem remains: As von Wright himself indirectly makes clear in his analyses of causal conditionship relations, one can never begin a causal analysis with *total* states of a *Tractatus*-world; one must rather always begin with "fragments" of such total states, that is, with "incomplete" state-spaces that can be broadened to include new "generic states" as the case requires – and this is precisely characteristic of causal analyses. If one understands "*Tractatus*-world" in this – doubly restricted – sense, then it appears to me relatively unproblematic; one could then say that by means of causal interpretations reality is "constituted", so to speak, as a *Tractatus*-world.

In view of the above, I find that the postulate of logical atomism has found entry into von Wright's exposition in EaU in a misleading way. In any case I do not understand what sense it is supposed to make in an analysis of causal conditionship relations to start with the fiction of "completely" described "total states" of the world at a given location in time (EaU, 44). If we analyze alternative courses of development in systems with the same initial conditions, there is then, in my opinion, no sense in proceeding on the assumption that identical initial states of affairs are identical *total* states of the world. We do not need to make this assumption, and indeed we *cannot*. That is, we can never start from anything but system "fragments" or "incomplete" state-spaces. The dis-

³ See, for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Schriften*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), 11 and 317.

^{3a} <At this point half a paragraph of the original German version of the text has been omitted, because it was based on a misleading translation of v. Wright's term "state of affairs" as "*Zustand*" in the German trans. of EaU, and therefore would become unintelligible if trans. into English. Since, however, the source of the confusion is v. Wright's ambiguous

covery of alternative developmental courses within a system then leads us – as a rule – to the conjecture that the total states of the world corresponding respectively to the identical initial states are not only different, but different in a causally *relevant* sense. One could understand the principle of causality as the – *a priori* – presupposition that in the case of alternative developments in the history of a system we can always find a *more complete* description of the world, in which the initial or boundary conditions, assumed at first to be identical, prove to be different.

use of the term “state of affairs”, which makes it impossible to translate it consistently as either “*Sachverhalt*” or “*Zustand*”, and since this ambiguity of the term (“state of affairs”) plays some role for the argument which follows, I wish to point out what I see to be the problem: Obviously the *primary* (and intended) meaning of v. Wright’s term “state of affairs” is that of Wittgenstein’s “*Sachverhalt*” (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 2, 2.061, 4.1, 4.21). Given this meaning v. Wright’s thesis that for purposes of a causal analysis we can conceive “states of affairs” as the “ontological building-bricks” of the world evidently corresponds to Wittgenstein’s statement that “the world is the totality of facts, not of things” (*Tractatus* 1.1). States of affairs then would belong to the same “ontological category” as facts, that is, states of affairs, in Strawson’s terms, would be the “pseudomaterial” correlates of statements (P. F. Strawson, *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, London, 1971, 195). However, already in the *Tractatus* the term “state of affairs” (“*Sachverhalt*”) is used in an ambiguous way, an ambiguity which is related to Wittgenstein’s idea of logical analysis and to his picture theory of language; it is precisely this ambiguity to which Wittgenstein himself has pointed in his remarks on “*Komplex und Tatsache*” (L. Wittgenstein, *Schriften*, Bd. 2, Frankfurt, 1964, 301-03). The same ambiguity recurs in v. Wright’s use of the term; this becomes particularly clear in v. Wright’s *Norm and Action*, chap. 2, §§4-6 (London, 1964), to which v. Wright refers in footnote 19 to chap. 2 of EaU for a fuller clarification of the notion of an “occasion” and of “the distinction between generic and individual proposition-like entities” (EaU, 185). On 25-26 of *Norm and Action*, v. Wright distinguishes between different *types of fact*, where a “fact” is meant to be that to which a proposition “corresponds” if it is true. The “types of fact”, however, which v. Wright mentions are “states of affairs”, “processes” and “events” (p. 26). And then v. Wright goes on to show (27-28) that the three types of fact are not logically independent of each other, but that, for example, events can be understood as *transitions* from one state of affairs to another one (28). Now if states of affairs, processes and events belong to the same ontological category, I would follow Strawson and claim that they *all cannot* belong to the same category as *facts*. “Facts are what statements (when true) state; they are not, like things or happenings on the face of the globe, witnessed or heard or seen, broken or overturned, interrupted or prolonged...” (Strawson, 1.c.196). States of affairs would then be states of something, and, like events, they could be mentioned, talked about or described (compare *Norm and Action*, 26), but not *stated*. Correspondingly v. Wright often uses the simple term “state” instead of “state of affairs”, and he talks, as physicists do, about “initial states” and “end states” (1.c. 28). But then the German word “*Zustand*” actually expresses the “ontological status” of what states of affairs (in v. Wright’s sense) are better than the word “*Sachverhalt*” would, although what is lost in the translation of “state of affairs” as “*Zustand*” is precisely the ambiguity in v. Wright’s use of the term, that is, its being meant *basically* as a correlate of “*Sachverhalt*” or “*Tatsache*” (“fact”). Now if states of affairs are on the same ontological level as events (compare also CaD, 14), they can be considered as the “static” counterpart of events. And then, of course, it makes sense (i) to declare *events* to be the genuine terms of causal relations (CaD, 14) and (ii) to try to interpret events as transitions from one state to another state (that is, from an initial state to an end state). Now my argument on 11-12 is that we cannot substitute the distinction between different “occasions” for the distinction between different things, and that with “occasions” instead of “things” our language would not have the right “logical multiplicity” for purposes of a causal analysis. This means, however, that – contrary to von Wright (EaU, 45) – some knowledge of the “inner structure” of his “ontological building-bricks” is necessary to give a correct account of causal conditionship-relations. Only within the language of mathematical physics would it make sense to speak of “spatio-temporal locations” as *principia individuationis* for (generically conceived) states of affairs. And only in this case, it seems to me, would the categorial distinction between “states” and “facts”, although not becoming pointless, become *practically* unimportant.>

As I said, I believe that these are problems of *exposition*. I have mentioned them mainly because of the difficulties they gave me in reading EaU. But these problems could be connected with another problem that I suspect is no mere expository one: My impression is that von Wright's use of the term "generic states of affairs" most certainly stands in need of clarification.

Von Wright maintains that generic states of affairs can obtain or not obtain on given occasions, that is, at given spatio-temporal locations (EaU, 43). The examples he uses are "that the sun is shining", and "that a certain door is open". He declares that states of affairs should be understood as the "ontological building-bricks" of the world, whereas "things, properties, and relations are ontological entities which fall outside of the formal-logical frame of our investigations" (EaU, 45). Now it seems to me that this simplification — that is, the restriction to relations between generic states representable by propositional logic — is not appropriate for purposes of causal analysis. The following consideration should make this clear: in a *Tractatus*-world, in which only states of affairs figure as "ontological building-bricks", one can take the "homonymous" states that are instantiated at various times ("states" here understood in the everyday sense according to which they can be predicated of particular things) of different objects of the same kind either as instantiations of the same generic state, or as instantiations of different generic states. If one decides for the first possibility, then the following problem arises: One can no longer distinguish between a case in which one and the same object G_1 at a given location at the point of time t_1 and t_2 is in the two successive states z_1 and z_2 , and a case in which the object G_1 at a given location at the point of time t_1 is in the state z_1 , and the object G_2 at the same location at the point of time t_2 is in the state z_2 . It seems clear to me that for the purposes of a causal analysis the two cases must be logically distinguishable if the analysis is not to burden itself with very massive, and I should think, problematic assumptions. If one chooses the second of the two above-mentioned possibilities, then the same kind of states of different objects would be in any case instantiations of *different*, "generic states". But then, every object would be "imbedded" in its own state-space, so to speak, which seems to me to contradict very clearly the fundamental idea of von Wright's construction. For in this case (1) "things" would be admitted into the world as "ontological building-bricks", contrary to von Wright's presupposition, and (2) as a rule two different experiments could no longer be taken as instantiations of the same generic course of events.

From this it seems to follow that in a world made up of states (and events), for the purpose of a causal analysis things must be present as well — and indeed not in order to distinguish between different generic states, as indicated above, but rather in order to distinguish between different "occurrences" of *the same* generic states. In other words, if one discounts for once the temporal dimension, the distinction between "occasions" seems to amount largely to a distinction between things (or objects). This is the case at least as long as we assume a world recognizably similar to our own. In the light of this I should think that von Wright's spatio-temporal locations are supposed to assume that (logical) function of things; needless to say, he avoids the concomitant problem by restricting himself in his analyses to the time variable. But I believe that talk of generic states that obtain or do not obtain at given spatio-temporal locations has

an unproblematic sense only if one has already tacitly canonized the descriptive method of mathematical physics, for example in the determination of field magnitudes for every spatio-temporal point. I think that von Wright's *Tractatus*-model really does contain an implicit assumption of this sort; in any case I find that only if we think of state-descriptions of physical systems in the technical-mathematical sense do certain features of von Wright's model become plausible: the replacement of things by spatio-temporal locations, the logical priority of states to events, and the idea of "complete" state descriptions. What I find problematic in this tacit (as it appears to me) orientation to the language of physics is not the assumption of an internal relation between the nomic concept of causality and the descriptive method of mathematical physics, but rather the fact that this relationship remains unanalyzed and therefore opaque.

I am not sure whether my objections to von Wright's logical framework for the analysis of causal relations are really to the point. At any rate, they reflect my increasing difficulties in making his argument — at first so temptingly simple and plausible — clear to myself. Apart from that, it seems to me that von Wright's analysis of specific causal relations — in the sense of sufficient and/or necessary conditions — retains its validity even without the massive presuppositions criticized here. The same holds true, in my opinion, for his interventionist interpretation of the concept of causality; it can be discussed without reference to the problems touched upon so far.

II. The Relation between the Concept of Cause and the Concept of Action

The decisive connection between the theory of causality and the theory of action is achieved by von Wright by means of an "actionist" interpretation of the concept of causality. One could say that this interpretation represents an attempt to reverse the traditional empiricist way of looking at the relationship between causality and action: Von Wright counters a causalistic theory of action with an actionist (or "interventionist")⁴ theory of causality. In the following I would like to take as my point of departure von Wright's base line of argument for an interventionist interpretation of the concept of causality as it is presented in the Woodbridge Lectures, *Causality and Determinism* (CaD, 36ff), where the presentation is clearer and more complete than in EaU. The starting point is the problem of distinguishing between nomic and accidental regularities. Von Wright proceeds on the assumption widely accepted today that lawlike statements are characterized by the fact that counterfactual conditionals can be inferred from them. Thus in order to say with justification that a regularly recurring connection of two states of affairs is (causally) necessary, a counterfactual conditional would have to be verified: "...to ask for criteria of (causal) lawlike-

⁴ I am following H. Schneider's suggestion to make use of the term "interventionist", coined by Raimo Tuomela, for von Wright's terms "actionist", "manipulative", and "experimentalist". See H. J. Schneider, "Die Asymmetrie der Kausalrelation: Überlegungen zur interventionistischen Theorie G. H. von Wrights", in *Vernünftiges Denken: Studien zur praktischen Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie*, (Berlin/New York, 1978), 218, n. 1. In his excellent work Schneider demonstrates among other things how the problem of the "asymmetry" of the causal relation can be solved on the basis of an interventionist theory of causality. Von Wright has not in my opinion solved this problem in an entirely satisfactory manner. I shall not be going into this further in the following considerations.

ness and to ask for a verification procedure for (causal) counterfactuals is to ask for the same" (CaD, 38). Now, according to von Wright, there is only one possible way that we can verify, at least indirectly, counterfactual conditionals: this possibility results from our ability to intervene in the world by acting. The ability to act itself already involves a counterfactual element of a *non-causal* nature; that is, we say that something is the result of an action only if it is a state of affairs of which we believe that without our intervention it *would* not have come about. The ability to act presupposes the existence of certain "normal courses of events"^{vi} that can be expressed by corresponding non-causal counterfactual conditionals. ("Had I not opened the window, it would – under the given circumstances – have remained closed.") Now in order to verify a *causal* counterfactual conditional – concerning, for example, the connection of the states of affairs *p* and *q* – we must bring about *p* in a situation in which *p* would not occur without our interference, and see if *q* then follows; if we then make sure in addition that *q* does not occur in a situation, the same in all relevant aspects, in which we do *not* bring about *p*, then we have approached as near as possible the "verification" of the corresponding causal counterfactual conditional.

It seems that our confidence in causal counterfactual conditionals and in the nomic concatenation of things has its root in the kind of complementary experiences which we have just described: doing something and noticing that a certain thing follows; refraining from doing and noticing that the same thing does not follow (CaD, 45).

The question is: What really is the nature of the relationship between action and causality? Von Wright emphasizes that it is not a question of an "*ontic*" dependency: The existence of causal relationship is independent of whether the initial states of affairs are in fact brought about by acting or whether they come about in some other way. But it is also not a question of a mere *epistemic* dependency of causality on action; that is, it is not simply a question of the – trivial – fact that we broaden our *knowledge* of causal relations by means of (experimental) action. It is much more a question of a *conceptual* dependence (CaD, 50) of the concept of causality on the concept of action. But this means that we cannot explicate what a causal relationship is without having recourse to the concept of action; and this in turn means that we could not interpret the world in terms of causal relations without the awareness of our ability to act. It is therefore irrelevant that in many factual causal relationships we are not in a position to set up the corresponding initial conditions by our acting; it is sufficient that with our factual possibilities of action we have a point of contact for the interpretation, and room for the verification, of regularities as *causal* regularities.

I find von Wright's arguments convincing; I also believe that in the *Essays*^{vi} he has convincingly responded to his critics, Winch and Tuomela in particular. (*Essays*, 375ff) His interventionist theory of the concept of causality already leads one to assume that "actions" do not belong to the category of "events" that can be understood as being tied into causal relationships. If one wishes to speak of "causal relationships" in contexts of acting, and hence in the social and historical sciences as well, then – presumably – by "causality" something other

must be understood here than in the case of a nature causally interpreted on the basis of experimental action. Correspondingly, von Wright attempts to show that the logic of the explanation of actions is different from that of deductive-nomological explanations.

III. The Logic of Explanations of Actions

Von Wright's analyses of the explanation of actions by means of "practical syllogisms" can be understood as an attempt to reformulate on a solid basis the so-called "Logical Connection Argument". As is well known, this argument has played an important role in recent discussions about the logic of action explanations. Von Wright refers to this discussion when he distinguishes between "causalists" and "intentionalists": "...I shall call those who think that the intention can be a humane [sic] cause of behavior *causalists*, and those who regard the connection between intention and behavior as being of a conceptual or logical nature *intentionalists*" (EaU, 95). Von Wright's thesis is that an intentional view of "teleological" explanations ("A does *a* in order to bring about *p*") can be substantiated by understanding teleological explanations as practical syllogisms "turned upside down". In its simplest form, the structure of the practical syllogism is as follows (EaU, 96):

(PS)^{vi} A intends to bring about *p*.

A considers that he cannot bring about *p* unless he does *a*.

Therefore A sets himself to do *a*.

In EaU von Wright proceeds on the assumption that the schema (PS) would have to be considerably modified in order to bring about a logical connection between premises and conclusion. For this purpose he introduces, among other things, a time factor; the modified schema at which he finally arrives on the basis of a series of simple considerations then looks like this (EaU, 107):

(PS₁) From now on A intends to bring about *p* at time *t*.

From now on A considers that, unless he does *a* no later than at time *t'*, he cannot bring about *p* at time *t*.

Therefore, no later than when he thinks time *t'* has arrived, A sets himself to do *a*, unless he forgets about the time or is prevented.

Before I return to the question whether the schema (PS₁) represents a decisive improvement over schema (PS), I would like to discuss briefly the points von Wright raises in EaU with regard to the question of the *kind* of logical connection between premises and conclusion in a practical syllogism. Von Wright sees the logical connection between the premises and the conclusion of a practical syllogism based on the fact that – to oversimplify – neither can be *verified* independently of the other.

The verification of the conclusion of a practical argument presupposes that we can verify a correlated set of premises which entail logically that the behavior observed to have occurred is intentional under the description

given to it in the conclusion. Then we can no longer affirm these premises and deny the conclusion, i.e. deny the correctness of the description given of the observed behavior. But the set of verified premises need not, of course, be the same as the premises of the practical argument under discussion.

The verification of the premises of a practical argument again presupposes that we can single out some recorded item of behavior as being intentional under the description accorded to it either by those premises themselves ("immediate" verification) or by some other set of premises which entail those of the argument under discussion ("external" verification).

In this mutual dependence of the verification of premises and the verification of conclusions in practical syllogisms consists, as I see it, the truth of the Logical Connection Argument. (EaU, 115-16)

Understanding the logical connection between premises and conclusion in practical syllogisms in von Wright's sense leads to a remarkable consequence: A "prospective" employment of practical syllogisms is possible only in a sharply restricted sense, since the existence of an action (or of an attempted action) is part of the conditions that are necessary for the verification of the premises of a PS. This condition is of course in a certain sense too strong; we can have good reasons to attribute an intention to someone without the corresponding action already being present. But even then, according to von Wright, we must always reckon with the possibility that someone, without really *changing* his intention, is *prevented* from carrying out his intention by an external or internal occurrence. (EaU, 116-17) It follows from this possibility that with respect to the inference of *future* behavior from the premises of a practical argument, it is not possible to talk of a logical necessity in the strict sense. A logically necessary relation between premises and conclusion can be said to obtain only when the corresponding behavior — in the conclusion — is already present; the necessity of the practical inference is "a necessity conceived *ex post actu*". (EaU, 117)

I would like to return to the question whether von Wright's initially mentioned attempt at a modification of the schema (PS) took the right direction. In my opinion the answer is negative. For premises of the kind "from now on (*A* intends, believes)..." either contain risky prognoses that really have no business being in a PS, or they are simply alternative formulations for "*A* intends or believes *now*...". In this case the corresponding conclusion is valid but still only on the assumption that *A* does not change his intentions and/or convictions before the time of his acting arrives — otherwise the practical syllogism would, in von Wright's formulation, "dissolve itself". (EaU, 117) If it is a question of understanding the "logical connection" of intentions and actions, then one could say that the step from (PS) to (PS₁) means a step in the wrong direction — namely in a direction that is determined by the ideal of the deductive-nomological model of explanation. In line with this, von Wright dropped the corresponding modifications of the schema (PS) in a later essay entitled "On So-called Practical Inference";⁵ and limited his analysis to practical syllogisms in the "now form".

In the essay just mentioned, von Wright has in my opinion gone beyond his considerations in EaU in several decisive points. In the following I would there-

fore like to draw from this article (as well as from an earlier one, "Practical Inference"),⁶ in order to discuss some aspects of the problem of the "Logical Connection Argument" that seem to me to have remained obscure in EaU. I think that for a further clarification two distinctions, emphasized by von Wright in these essays, are particularly necessary: namely (1) the distinction between the logical relationship among different intentions on the one hand, and the logical connection of intentions and actions on the other; and (2) the distinction between practical syllogisms in the third person, and practical syllogisms in the first person. On the basis of von Wright's considerations I shall attempt in several steps to make the Logical Connection Argument more precise.

(1) In EaU (123-24) von Wright discusses the case of a "mutilated" PS of the following kind:

- (PS₁) *A* intended to press the button.
 Therefore *A* pressed the button. (EaU, 123)

Von Wright makes it clear that this "syllogism" can only in a strained way be viewed as a possible counterpart of a genuine teleological explanation; this syllogism corresponds to the borderline case in which it is not really a question of the *explanation* of an action, but rather of the *interpretation* of an instance of *behavior*, thus a case in which we *interpret* a particular behavior *as* a particular intentional action. To interpret behavior as intentional action *means* to understand it in the light of an intention. Now the nature of the logical relationship between an intention and the action that (directly) belongs to it can be made clear already by the "syllogism" (PS₁). For it holds that (a) the action is "logically contained" in the intention — from which alone, of course, it does not follow that *having* an intention results with logical necessity in *carrying out* the action (see von Wright's objection against a corresponding form of the Logical Connection Argument, Eau, 95). And it holds that (b) the verification of the "premise" and the "conclusion" of (PS₁) are dependent on each other — with the restrictions made above. This means that *having* an intention logically entails the *performance* of the corresponding action, unless the intention is changed or a "preventive interference" occurs. (*Handlung, Norm und Intention*, 76; or *Acta Sociologica*, 49) In the logical connection of intention and action, a (a) "semantic" and a (b) "dispositional" aspect can thus be distinguished; the connection is to be understood in such a way that inferences of *future* behavior from *present* intentions are not possible with certainty.

(2) In addition to the logical connection between action and intention, the logical connection of various intentions with one another also plays a role in practical arguments, at least implicitly. This logical relation between various intentions can best be made clear if one also takes into consideration — as von

⁵ Georg Henrik von Wright, "On So-Called Practical Inference", *Acta Sociologica* 15 (1972). 39-53, see esp. 46-47 (cited hereafter as AS); or *Ibid.*, *Handlung, Norm und Intention: Untersuchungen zur deontischen Logik* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1977), 61-81, see esp. 71-72 (cited hereafter as HNI).

⁶ Von Wright, "Practical Inference", *Philosophical Review* 72 (1963), 159-79 (cited hereafter as PR); or HNI, 41-60.

Wright does in both essays mentioned above — the practical arguments in the *first* person corresponding to those in the third person. I think that von Wright's considerations show that we cannot completely understand either the meaning of the Logical Connection Argument or the explanatory function of practical syllogisms if we do not take into account the asymmetrical relationship between practical arguments in the third person and those in the first person.

I would like to start with the schema of an inference in which the first and third person are virtually interchangeable (compare HNI, 44 and 68; or PR, 162 and AS, 44):

(PS₃) *X* intends to bring about *p*.
 X can bring about *p* only if he does *a*.
 Therefore *X* must do *a*.

(PS₄) I intend to bring about *p*.
 I can bring about *p* only if I do *a*.
 Therefore I must do *a*.

In these two examples the conclusions express a "practical necessity" (HNI, 67 or AS, 43); they do not state, at any rate not in the case of the third person inference, what someone *will* do. I would now like to make the transition from the schema (PS₃) to a schema corresponding to the (PS) schema from EaU:

(PS₅) *X* intends to bring about *p*.
 X believes that he can bring about *p* only if he does *a*.
 Therefore *X* will do *a*.

This argument clearly cannot without qualifications be reformulated as an argument in the first person. *One* possible first person equivalent of (PS₅) would be (PS₄). Another possible equivalent would be

(PS₆) I intend to bring about *p*.
 I can only bring about *p* if I do *a*.
 Therefore I will do *a*.

The conclusion of (PS₆), however, is not a prediction of my future behavior, but rather a "declaration of intention" (HNI, 65; or AS, 41); that is, it expresses an intention. Thus the argument (PS₆) joins two *intentions* with one another. Clearly the argument (PS₆) stands quite close to argument (PS₄) — and this fact holds true in contradistinction to the corresponding arguments in the third person. Still, there is a characteristic logical distinction between (PS₄) and (PS₆). One could really make an inference of the kind (PS₄) and then — after one sees what one has let oneself in for — still change one's original intention. But one cannot speak in this way of an inference of the (PS₆) kind. Here the conclusion expresses the forming of an intention; we cannot actually speak here of an "argument" in the sense of propositional logic, for the necessity of the conclusion depends on the readiness of the "concluding" person to uphold his or her primary intention through to the conclusion, as it were. (Compare HNI, 70; AS, 45) The argument (PS₆) could therefore also be taken as the "pseudo-propositional" version of a practical syllogism, which can be distinguished from the ones previously dealt with by the fact that its premises are not propositions, but

rather an intention and a conviction, whereas the conclusion is a derived intention. (Compare HNI, 50-51; PR, 168-69.) (Such a practical syllogism would come closer in a certain respect to the Aristotelian idea of a practical syllogism than the inferences dealt with up to now.)

We could now ask what sort of logical relationship obtains between "primary" and "secondary" intentions represented by inferences of the kind (PS₆). This logical relationship clearly consists in the fact that I cannot *have* a primary intention and corresponding "instrumental knowledge", and at the same time *not have* the secondary intention – and this inability is a *logical* inability. It is a logical inability, because having (primary and secondary) intentions is connected with the ability to make inferences of the (PS₄) kind (or similar ones). This of course does not mean that the relationship between "primary" and "secondary" intentions is always or even as a rule mediated by explicitly drawn inferences of the kind mentioned. However, it does mean that the relationship admits of a *representation* by inferences of such a kind. In other words, the agent is assumed to have the ability to *justify* an action – or the necessity of an action – with the help of the corresponding arguments. In the sense of these considerations one can also understand the Kantian thesis, to which von Wright makes recourse, that the following proposition is analytically true: "Whoever wills the end, so far as reason has decisive influence on his action, wills also the indispensably necessary means to it that lie in his power."^{viii} (Compare HNI, 70; or AS, 45)

Now instead of understanding the schema (PS₆) as an equivalent of the schema (PS₅) in the first person, obviously one could also conversely understand the following schema as an equivalent of the schema (PS₆) in the *third* person:

- (PS₇) X intends to bring about *p*.
 X believes that he can bring about *p* only if he does *a*.
 Therefore X intends to do *a*.

This again is a "genuine" inference. If we assert its validity, then we must have recourse to the logical grammar of the word "intend". But we can only reconstruct the logical grammar of the word "intend" – and this is the point in von Wright's considerations that I would like to bring out, without being entirely certain whether he would agree with me – by clarifying the relationship between first and third person practical syllogisms, and between "genuine" (propositional) practical syllogisms <and those of the type (PS₆)>.

(3) Taking what has been said under (1) and (2) together, it becomes clear why one can attribute an explanatory function to practical syllogisms, although they are not comparable with respect to their "prospective"^{ix} employment to deductive-nomological arguments. One could say with von Wright that practical syllogisms provide the "teleological framework" that makes an action – if it has occurred – *understandable*. (I am leaving aside for the moment the question of actions of a type other than that of teleological actions – in the broadest sense – dealt with here.) The reason for the fact that the interpretation of an action by means of such a teleological framework is nevertheless something *analogous* to causal explanation, is that the 'fitting in' of an instance of behavior as an intentional action within a teleological framework contains general presupposi-

tions of a kind such that actions "logically emerge" from intentions, and intentions from other intentions. What corresponds in teleological explanations to the general premises of deductive-nomological explanations lies, as it were, in these general presuppositions; it is therefore also no wonder that the attempts of "causalists" to reconstruct explanations of actions in accordance with deductive-nomological models of explanation were as a rule attempts to "transform" grammatical sentences into statements of empirical regularities. If one wanted to speak of two different types of causality corresponding to the distinction between two types of explanation — we could call them "natural causality" and "<"symbolic causality">" respectively — then one could also say that in the case of explanations of actions the reconstruction of a logical relationship between intention and action is sufficient precisely because the logical connection of symbols is itself presupposed to be the decisive causal "mechanism". This presupposition is hypothetical in the sense that in a given case it must be confirmed by finding a teleological framework for a specific behavior which is in agreement with the empirical facts — just as the presupposition can also fail in a given case, for example if the teleological interpretation of an instance of behavior is not successful.

It should be clear from the foregoing that I hold von Wright's attempt at a reconstruction of the logic of teleological explanations to be convincing and successful. Due to limited space I shall not deal explicitly with the objections to von Wright's theory that have since been put forward from the "causalist" side. Nor do I wish to consider in detail the objections and supplementary proposals to be found in a number of the papers collected in the *Essays*. They have prompted von Wright to make important and interesting clarifications and additions (see his "Replies", *Essays*, 393-413). In particular, I am thinking of von Wright's treatment of Sturgeon's counter-example as analyzed by Kim, his thoroughgoing response to Niiniluoto, and his clarifying remarks on Martin's objections. In these replies von Wright makes clear in which way <the specific function> of teleological explanations can be distinguished from <the function of those explanations and interpretations> that are meant either to render plausible the premises of practical inferences or to render intelligible the contexts within which practical inferences occur — explanations and interpretations, therefore, which are concerned with additional aspects of the "understanding" of actions. Since the objections formulated by the various authors in *Essays* nevertheless do not in my opinion really get to the core of von Wright's arguments, as von Wright himself has convincingly shown in his replies, I have chosen here a detailed presentation and interpretation of his position in preference to an explicit discussion of the critical objections.

The question remains nevertheless: Can it be said that von Wright's reconstruction of the logic of teleological explanations is a reconstruction of "the" logic of action explanations? The answer must surely be in the negative. This is first of all because such antecedents of action as emotions and generalized motives — for example, jealousy, wishes, and the like — are not to be found in von Wright's schema of the practical syllogism,⁷ and secondly because von Wright

⁷ Charles Taylor, "Explaining Action", *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy and the Social Sciences* 13 (1970), 54-89; or *Ibid.*, "Erklärung des Handelns", *Erklärung und Interpretation in den Wissenschaften von Menschen*, trans. Nils Thomas

analyzes goal-directed action only in its logically simplest form, thereby leaving out of account the question of the explanation of the *determinants* of action. (But the explanation of the determinants of action certainly *can* be an essential aspect of the explanation of actions.) Von Wright would presumably agree with these restrictions. However, what interests me here is a different problem, namely, that about the explanation of norm-governed actions. Since von Wright deals with this question in connection with his reflections on the logic of historical and sociological explanations, I shall postpone the discussion of this to the following section.

IV. The Logic of Historical and Social-Scientific Explanations

In the introduction to EaU, von Wright formulates the fundamental thesis of his theory of science, which is connected with his analysis of teleological explanations:

It is a tenet of the present work that the practical syllogism provides the sciences of man with something long missing from their methodology: an explanation model in its own right which is a definite alternative to the subsumption-theoretic covering law model. Broadly speaking, what the subsumption-theoretic model is to causal explanation and explanation in the natural sciences, the practical syllogism is to teleological explanation in history and the social sciences. (EaU, 27)

At the end of his "Replies" in the *Essays*, von Wright formulates the same thesis again in a more exact way. There he states that social-scientific explanations indeed do not as a rule admit of a reconstruction as practical inferences, but it nevertheless holds for them that "the role of the PI-schema is *pivotal* in the sense that the other explanatory mechanisms all seem to revolve round this schema as their core". (*Essays*, 413) According to von Wright, we have found in the practical inference schema the logical "core" of historical and social-scientific explanation. In the following I would like to distinguish two viewpoints from which this fundamental thesis of von Wright can be discussed. The *first* question to be posed is the following one: *In what sense* can one view explanations of actions as the logical core of historical and social-scientific explanations? The *second* question is whether the practical syllogism in von Wright's sense provides a *universally valid* schema for the explanation of actions. In addition to the relevant chapter in EaU, I shall in the following also draw upon the paper, "Determinism and the Study of Man".⁸

(1) Concerning von Wright's answer to the first question, I shall limit myself to a summary discussion; anything beyond this is scarcely possible in view of the complexity of the problem and the necessity of being brief.

Lindquist (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 65-117.

⁸ Von Wright, "Determinism and the Study of Man", *Essays on Explanation and Understanding: Studies in the Foundations of Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. by Juha Manninen and Raimo Tuomela (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1976), 415-35 (cited hereafter as *Essays*); or *Ibid.*, "Determinismus in den Geschichts- und Sozialwissenschaften", *HNI*, 131-52.

Von Wright first analyzes the example of an historical explanation (outbreak of World War I). As a rule one can call such explanations "causal" in the sense that the *explanans* and the *explanandum* are logically independent of each other. Von Wright's thesis is that the *explanans* and the *explanandum* are nevertheless linked with one another in typical cases – not by universal laws, but rather by practical syllogisms. (EaU, 142) Thus he construes the "causal mechanism" that links the events *A* and *B* together as a chain of actions in which the result of actions b_1 on the part of agent or agents H_1 "releases" a practical inference (till then only latently present in a motivational background) and a corresponding action b_2 on the part of agent H_2 , the result of which again "releases" a new practical inference on the part of agent H_3 , and so forth up to the event to be explained. (EaU, 143-44)

The sequence of events and actions in von Wright's example is the sequence of events that led from the murder in Sarajevo to the outbreak of war. I am leaving aside here the question whether all of the practical inferences in question are to be assigned to the teleological type of explanation. Assuming this to be the case, I hold von Wright's reconstruction plausible at least for a first approximation, although, as he himself emphasized elsewhere (HNI, 150; *Essays*, 433), it reproduces a "logic of events" that can be assumed only under certain conditions. These obtain if the general structures of the agent's goals and motivations are fixed, and if the "transformation" of the events into practical premises can be assumed to be unproblematic. Here it is primarily a question of contexts of events and actions in which there are no genuine learning processes on the part of the agent, that is, processes involving changes in attitudes, motivations, and convictions – contexts, that is, in which the "mechanics" of the events, so to speak, steer with blind logic towards a catastrophe. It can also be a question of contexts of purely strategic action. What is also noticeable in von Wright's example is that it is in any case not a genuine causal explanation of an historical event in the sense in which one inquires about the "underlying" causes of World War I; one should therefore not overestimate its value as a prototype of historical explanation. It nevertheless seems to me that von Wright's reconstruction is adequate at least for an important aspect of historical explanations.

Von Wright develops considerations analogous to those regarding historical causal explanations – which he calls "quasi-causal" in contra-distinction to genuine Humean causal explanation – pertaining both to the analysis of social "feed-back" processes and the type of causal analysis in social science that is based on the ascertainment of empirical correlations. His thesis is that here as well the respective causal relationships do not correspond to the nomological concept of causality. It is rather the case that (a) the causal mechanisms below the macro-level of sociological descriptions are motivational "mechanisms" that can be analyzed by means of PS-schemas, and that (b) the universal regularities, whose existence must be presupposed by a "causalist" interpretation of the social-scientific analyses, do not exist at all. Of course (a) and (b) are closely related; I would like briefly to discuss von Wright's justification of assertion (b). He maintains that in social reality there are two different analogs to natural laws, of which neither has the status of a natural law of society. The first analog consists in the institutions and norms to which the actions of individuals are oriented. To these correspond empirical regularities that change historically to

the same extent as do the "normative universals" constitutive of them. The second analog consists in economic and social "laws"; von Wright claims that these are in fact applications "to specified types of activity and types of historical situation of very general conceptual patterns" (HNI, 151 or 434). The most general sociological "laws" would therefore have to be something like "grammatical sentences" (von Wright refers to his own conceptual analyses), that is, statements that can first receive a definite empirical content with their "application" to the concrete institutional frame of particular societies.

Even the most elementary laws of economics presuppose some institutionalized forms of exchanging commodities on a market and of rough standards of measuring the value of goods to a producer and consumer. It is usually not too difficult to see under which assumptions concerning the institutional frame these laws are conceptual necessities about the way in which wants and abilities regulate behavior. Within different frames different laws are valid. This means that different frames require different laws, if the logic of events is to be correctly described. (HNI, 151; or *Essays*, 434)

I find that a great deal can be said for von Wright's assertion, even if one does not limit oneself to the examples he uses, such as that of the inapplicability of the laws of classical market economy to the manipulated markets of late capitalist societies. (Ibid.) It is a well-known fact that so-called sociological laws become increasingly devoid of empirical content the more generally they are formulated, and a previously mentioned example from the theory of science points in the same direction: I mean the attempt of empiricist theorists of science to formulate lawlike premises for deductive-nomological explanations of actions. On the basis of his reasoning, von Wright comes to a conclusion similar to the one reached before him (albeit on the basis of other presuppositions) by representatives of "critical theory" — the conclusion, namely, that

social study occupies an intermediate position between philosophy and history. It can move in the direction of the one or the other of the two poles, but it cannot live a self-contained life divorced from either of them. (*Essays*, 434-35)

Taking the two above mentioned theses (a) and (b) together, the real point of von Wright's main thesis becomes clear: the PS-schema provides the logical core, as it were, of social-scientific and historical explanation. However, I believe that this thesis is correct only in a restricted sense. For it seems to me that the PS-schema is of no use when it comes to the "causal logic" of processes in which the formation and change of attitudes, motivations, and convictions, or in which the formation and change of institutions and value systems, play an essential role. To put it another way, the PS-schema does not put us in a position to understand the "unreflected" ("*naturwüchsig*") as well as the "rational" forms of determination of — external and internal — determinants of action, or of the systems of such determinants. That means, however, that the "logic of events" in contexts of symbolic interaction can only be partially reconstructed in the sense of a logic of action. I would therefore venture to say that although by

means of an analysis of the logic of action-explanations an important part of the logic of historical and social-scientific explanations can indeed be reconstructed, the latter cannot totally be reduced to the logic of action-explanations as to its logical "core".

(2) More important than the question of possibly necessary restrictions on von Wright's main thesis, however, is the question to which extent the PI-schema of teleological explanation is also valid for the areas of normatively governed actions. I would like to begin with an attempt at summarizing von Wright's remarks on the subject.

Von Wright distinguishes between "primary" and "secondary" norms (corresponding roughly to Searle's "regulative" and "constitutive" rules): primary norms are rules of conduct; secondary norms define (or "constitute") a practice (the social act of marriage, for example) (EaU, 151). Whereas primary norms play an important role in the explanation of actions, the recourse to secondary norms is particularly important if it is a question of *understanding* the *meaning* of actions.

It is therefore important for our inquiry to clarify the sense in which primary rules (norms) become effective as determinants of actions, or formative of motives. Von Wright first distinguishes two cases: the *first* case is the enforcement of norms by means of external sanctions. In this case the determinants of the action correspond to those of a teleological explanation (the intention to avoid a particular sanction, for example). (Compare HNI, 136; or *Essays*, 420) In the *second* case it is a question of *internalized* norms; in this case the reasons for acting in accordance with the given behavioral pattern result from the "simple acceptance of the rule". (HNI, 136; or *Essays*, 420) To these two cases of motivation on the basis of norms correspond two forms of social "non-freedom":^x The first is a form of non-freedom that makes its appearance as (external) coercion; the second is a form of non-freedom characterized by the fact that "external determinants" govern behavior. Von Wright understands external determinants as situations or actions that cause an agent to carry out an action *b* *because* the rule internalized by him demands it. Now one should think that for the explanation of "externally determined" actions practical syllogisms of the following kind (PS₈), or an equivalent of (PS₈) in the first person, would have to play a role:

- (PS₈) *A* finds himself in a situation *S*.
 A believes that in situations of the *S*-kind one ought to do *b*.
 Therefore *A* does *b*.

It appears that von Wright does not take this type of explanation into consideration. In the course of the following, I shall make a conjecture as to *why* he does not.

But first I would like to discuss von Wright's characterization of the case corresponding neither to *external* nor to *internal* non-freedom. Von Wright characterizes this case likewise as a case of internalized norms. But this time the norms are not followed "blindly", as it were; that is, they are not followed in the sense of a habitualized reaction to external determinants. They are rather followed because the agents see a "good" in the institutionalization of these norms, the realization of which lies in their own interest. (Compare HNI, 136; or *Essays*,

420) This interest can at the same time be a *general* ("public") interest; if, however, institutions and norms satisfy a public interest, then a relationship of "reflected" acknowledgement of them is clearly possible for all members of society. Social institutions are then upheld neither by external nor internalized coercion; rather they flourish on the basis of their *free* acknowledgement on the part of the individuals acting within them.

To the extent that it is a question of the agent's varying relationship to the norms he follows, one can recognize without difficulty in the three cases distinguished by von Wright the three states of moral consciousness distinguished by Kohlberg: the pre-conventional, the conventional, and the post-conventional. However, there is the difference that von Wright's three different cases cannot unequivocally be understood in terms of developmental stages; the first case (orientation with respect to external sanctions) can for example also come about as the result of the loss of authority of social norms, which leads to at least the partial replacement of internalized coercion by external coercion (von Wright speaks of "normative pressure").^{xi} But then von Wright interprets the two extreme cases – which I have put in analogy to the pre-conventional and post-conventional stages of moral consciousness – *likewise* in terms of a "teleological" schema of action, whereas he treats the middle case, that is, the case of behavior governed by external determinants (analogous to the conventional stage of moral consciousness), as a deficient type of motivational mechanism (See HNI, 135; or *Essays*, 419). One could say that in the middle case the agent lacks the rationality of conforming "means" to an "end" (of his own).

I do not think that I interpret von Wright entirely falsely by putting the predominance of the PI-schema of teleological action in his theory in close association with his conception of norm-governed action just mentioned. I must admit that I find this conception highly problematical. It corresponds to the way of thinking of modern proponents of natural law and utilitarianism, in which "practical" rationality is reduced to "instrumental" rationality – a way of thinking that on my view is not only exposed to weighty philosophical objections, but which is also contested in modern social science, starting, at the latest, with Durkheim. Since controversies about basic issues in philosophy and in social science respectively are involved, I cannot fully discuss the problem here. But I would like to mention two headings under which I would criticize von Wright's position.

(a) I think that on the basis of von Wright's presuppositions we cannot understand to which extent subjects capable of acting are constituted *as such* by the appropriation and internalization of symbolic universals (primary and secondary rules). It seems to me that the structural similarity observed above between the two extreme cases of norm-governed action contains implicitly the assumption that there are "pre-social" individuals capable of acting; on the basis of this assumption, the "conventional" type of norm-governed action can be conceived of *only* in the sense of a *deficient* rationality. If in contrast one makes the assumption that the ability of individuals to act at all arises as a consequence of their having come to assimilate the symbolic universals of an intersubjective life world, then one can neither retain the structural similarity of both extreme cases of norm-governed action, nor can one conceive conventional norm-governed action solely in terms of a *deficiency* of rationality (although it must of course

appear deficient from the standpoint of post-conventional morality). The conventional type of norm-governed acting would much rather have to be understood from the perspective of an appropriation of the *concept* of norms and a corresponding interaction-competence (Habermas) — that is, from the perspective of an appropriation of a competence that must be presupposed if we want to speak of “individuals capable of acting”. Then it makes no difference whether or not one understands the conventional stage of moral consciousness as a *necessary* stage of transition in moral development; the only important thing is that one distinguishes the motivational mechanisms on which the pre-conventional (instrumental) and post-conventional (moral) types of normative orientations are based.⁹

In a second step I would like to indicate how this critique of von Wright's "individualistic" approach can be "transposed", so to speak, onto the level of an analysis of practical syllogisms.

(b) I am proceeding on the assumption that agents have normative convictions of such a kind that in situations of the kind *S* one ought or ought not to perform an action *b*. One could also say instead that actions are evaluated by the agents themselves not only from the standpoint of their appropriateness as means to certain ends, but also from the standpoint of normative appropriateness as "correct", or "required" or as "wrong".

By means of a practical syllogism representing a somewhat modified, first person version of the syllogism (PS₈) introduced above, I would now like to illustrate a particular case of the evaluation of the normative correctness of an action:

(PS₉) I find myself in a situation of the *S*-kind.

In situations of the *S*-kind one must (as a decent human being, as a good Athenian) do *b*.

I must do b .

For the counterpart in the third person, one could draw the following conclusion instead of the conclusion in (PS₈):

X believes that he must do b .

and then think over how from this conclusion one reaches the further conclusion,

X will do b .

This case seems not to be quite so simple as the corresponding step from the intention to the action; nevertheless I think that it is at least sufficiently analogous to allow us to ignore the differences at present.

Now von Wright is clearly of the opinion that practical inferences whose premises contain the acknowledgment of a "duty" can in any case be taken as "derived practical inferences" that can be reduced in the final analysis to practical inferences of the teleological type. (See his reasoning in "Practical Inference", HNI, 58-60; or PR, 176-79.) He criticizes explicitly the "serious error" of Kant, who contested this possibility of a reference of "duties" to an "end"

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, "Moralentwicklung und Ich-Identität", *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976).

beyond duty. (HNI, 60) In the case of the (PS₉), one could designate the end determining the acknowledgement of the "duty" at issue as the end of living as a "decent human being" (as a good Athenian). For the agent in question what a decent human being (a good Athenian) is is obviously defined, among other things, by the fact that one does *b* in situations of the *S*-kind. (All this can be said from the standpoint of a conventional moral consciousness.) But if the "end" (something one wants to *be*, a form of identity, a form of life) in this case (not untypical in my opinion for the structures of moral argumentation) already *presupposes* the acknowledgement of the corresponding norm, then one can no longer reconstruct the case in terms of a teleological inference schema. The "must" or "ought" in practical inferences of the kind considered here must then designate a kind of "practical necessity" other than the "must" in inferences of the kind (PS₄).

Now one could object that what is said here is valid only for norm-governed action at the stage of the conventional moral consciousness (hence in the case of "externally determined" behavior in von Wright's sense). But then one would still have to be able to reconstruct norm-governed action at least in *this* case with the help of normative practical inferences. The question is, what happens in the transition — roughly speaking — from the conventional to the post-conventional moral consciousness? For von Wright this is the transition from blind adherence to given norms to an adherence to norms oriented to one's own ends. In a certain sense this is certainly correct, but, nonetheless, only in a certain sense. In order to show this, I would like to reconstruct the transition from the mere acknowledgement of given norms (or duties) to their "reflected" acknowledgement (or rejection), in a way different from von Wright's.

For this purpose I am once again going to take as my starting point a situation corresponding to the teleological inference schema. One could reply to someone who employs, say, the inference schema (PS₄) in the sense of justifying a practical necessity of acting: "But you are mistaken if you believe that you must do *a* in order to bring about *p*." The rational pursuance of such a situation would be a discourse in which arguments and counterarguments are given. To provide reasons means to defend or contest a claim to truth, that is, a universal validity claim with respect to the assertions made. We can reconstruct an analogous situation in the case of normative practical inferences: "But it is nonsense that one (as a decent human being) must do *b* in situations of the *S*-kind." (For example: "Don't you see that this norm only serves the interest of the ruling class, that it compels you to act against your own legitimate interests, that it is unjust," and so on.) The rational pursuance of such a situation is a *practical* discourse in which again arguments and counterarguments are given, and a claim to validity of normative assertions is defended or contested. Now to justify a normative claim to validity does not mean to justify why *I* (or you) ought to adhere to a particular norm (because, for instance, such an adherence proves useful in reaching certain ends). What it does mean is to demonstrate why *one* ought to follow a norm. Normative claims to validity are intersubjective, just as are theoretical claims to validity. Besides, it is contained in the very concept of social norms that by means of them the behavioral expectations of at least *two* agents are set in a reciprocal relationship. But this means that in the justification of normative claims to validity in von Wright's sense one can have recourse

solely to *such* ends as can be acknowledged by all those involved as *their* ends. Norms can be justified by recourse to ends only if it is a question of *generalizable* ends (interests, needs). The transition from conventional to post-conventional morality therefore does in fact involve a transition from mere duty to ends "beyond duty". (HNI, 60; or PR, 179) But to the extent that this transition can be characterized by the practice of arguing for or against normative claims to validity, it is based on the acknowledgment of the "meta-norm" that *my* ends *ought* to be generalizable ends. For this reason I also believe that the "final" ends to which one can have recourse in the justification of norms are forms of life corresponding to the meta-norms of rational argumentation, that is, ends that cannot be explicated without referring to previously acknowledged meta-norms of rational discourse.¹⁰

If that is true, however, then norm-governed behavior cannot be reconstructed by means of the teleological PI-schema. One would rather have to connect this type of action with a type of practical syllogism that represents the lowest level, as it were, or moral argumentation in the sense indicated here. But in my opinion one can only understand this form of argumentation if one sees in the mutual recognition of at least *two* individuals the structure aimed at by every justification of normative claims to validity, and by which alone such a justification can be confirmed. For this reason one cannot reconstruct the logic of norm-governed action from the perspective of an isolated agent pursuing his ends as purposively rational; in the case of norm-oriented behavior — if it is not a question of the first (instrumentalistic) case of those cases distinguished by von Wright — the immediate end is doing the right thing; this end, however, cannot be explicated without recourse to a relationship of recognition by *others*.

V. Final Remarks

With the "individualistic" and "atomistic" (Taylor) features of his theory of action, von Wright seems to me to remain closest to the empiricist tradition of philosophy that he himself puts into question at decisive points. So, if there is a point where his analytical clarification of the distinction between "explanation" and "understanding" remains unsatisfying, then I would see it in the problems just discussed. At the same time I must concede, however, that the critique indicated in the foregoing is more the formulation of a program than a finished analysis.^{10a} I am aware of the difficulty of carrying out such an analysis with the degree of explicitness that is a constant hallmark of von Wright's analyses. Furthermore, I fear that the impression of subtlety, precision of thought, and

¹⁰ In this sense Habermas and Apel attempt, in their efforts to establish a "communicative" ethic or ethic of "discourse", to save the substance of truth in Kant's "anti-teleological" ethic, which is in fact problematic in another respect. See, for example, J. Habermas, "Wahrheitstheorien", *Wirklichkeit und Reflexion: Festschrift für Walter Schulz*, ed. by Helmut Fahrenbach (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1973; Karl Otto Apel, "Das Apriori der Kommunikationsgemeinschaft und die Grundlagen der Ethik", *Transformation der Philosophie*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973).

^{10a} <Today (1984) I consider this "program" as being even more in need of clarification than I did five years ago. I hope to provide some such clarification in an article that I am writing at present.>

originality that one has at every step, as it were, while reading von Wright, cannot by any means adequately be evoked in a review. Taken as a whole, I consider the works of von Wright to represent the most important contribution to date of analytical philosophy to the problem of the relationship between explanation and understanding. The influence of these works, which I cannot explicitly go into here, is already immense. I believe that it will be difficult for the "hermeneutical" and "critical" theories, whose methods of inquiry have been given precision in such an impressive way by von Wright, critically to carry on his work at a comparable analytic level.¹¹

¹¹ This is the place where the "constructivist" theory of science and philosophy really should be mentioned; the attempts there, similar to von Wright's, move in the direction of an "ordinary language" clarification of positions in the hermeneutic and dialectical theory of science. The relationships, however, are too complex to be dealt with here.

TRANSLATION NOTES

I wish to thank Dr. David Marshall jr. for editorial advisement in the processing of this translation. (The Coordinator)

ⁱ Here and in the following, terms like "scientistic program" and "scientific monism" are used in the sense of von Wright's term "methodological monism" to translate the term "*einheitswissenschaftliches Programm*". Compare Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 4 (cited hereafter as EaU).

ⁱⁱ EaU, 95. Here it is clear that what is meant by "*einheitswissenschaftliches Programm*" is very close to what von Wright means by "positivism". See EaU, 4-5.

ⁱⁱⁱ To accord with von Wright's usage, here and in similar contexts "*bestimmt*" is rendered with "given".

^{iv} EaU, 48.

^v See CaD, 42-43.

^{vi} For the full title of *Essays* see n. 8 in the author's footnotes.

^{vii} Although von Wright's abbreviation is "PI" ("practical inference schema"), and not "(PS)" ("*praktischer Syllogismus*" or "*praktischer Schluß*"), I have retained "(PS)" to indicate that a number of the examples used here stem from the author of this article. (See EaU, 96)

^{viii} Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobs-Merrill, 1959), 34.

^{ix} See AS, 49.

^x The helpful term "non-freedom" is the one used by von Wright. See *Essays*, 420.

^{xi} See *Essays*, 419.

KONRAD GAISER, *PLATONS UNGESCHRIEBENE LEHRE;
STUDIEN ZUR SYSTEMATISCHEN UND GESCHICHTLICHEN
BEGRUNDUNG DER WISSENSCHAFT
IN DER PLATONISCHEN SCHULE**

Stuttgart: Klett, 1963.

Thomas Gerstmeyer

Translated by Dennis J. Schmidt

The attempt to present and reconstruct the "unwritten doctrine" of a thinker who has been dead for over 2000 years seems to be as hopeless as the effort to square a circle, for how is one supposed to have knowledge of his unwritten doctrine if not in writing? The "unwritten doctrine" is, of course, written, not by Plato himself, but by others writing about him.¹ This should always be kept in mind when considering Konrad Gaiser's book.

With other ancient authors, as for instance the Pre-Socratics, we are compelled to rely almost exclusively upon the statements of others about them. To consult the reports of doxographers who were not even contemporaries of these thinkers is not only useful, it is unavoidable. Why, however, should one feel oneself compelled to refer to secondary sources about a thinker who did not merely leave to posterity fragments or written aphorisms, but who left us a completed and full work, which is even refined literature, and which has been preserved for us virtually complete?

Many reasons have been introduced to explain such a move. The most convincing of these is the interest in pure philological research, which has taken up references in Aristotle to *ἀγραφα δόγματα* ("unwritten doctrines") and reports that others took down an oral lecture by Plato entitled "On the Good" (*περί τ' ἀγαθοῦ*), and attempted to put those reports and notes (*ὑπομνήματα*) together into a unified picture. Thus the largest portion of Gaiser's book consists of "source texts on the school and oral teachings of Plato" (pp. 441-559). However, Gaiser's interest in Plato is not primarily of a philological nature. His basic concern is rather to interpret the "unwritten doctrine" and thereby "to give a new representation of the essence and inner consistency of Platonic thought"

¹ Gaiser himself reflects upon this difficulty, but puts aside every objection with the assertion that the authors of these writings about Plato were especially competent and understood him very well (p. 585).

(p. 1).

For a long time interpreters of the Platonic dialogues have wanted to decode the inconsistencies and obscure passages in the texts with an "esoteric key," that is, with a secret doctrine which Plato is to have consciously withheld. Furthermore, in the transition from Plato to Aristotle they found certain gaps which can only be explained by the assumption that Aristotle referred to statements by Plato which we do not know and cannot know because they were not written down. Among such statements is the lecture "On the Good."

The disclosure, clarification, and reconstruction of this lecture is due especially to the pioneering work of W. Jaeger and J. Stenzel. Others pursued the investigations of the esoteric doctrine until they were given a new quality by H. J. Krämer, *Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles* (Heidelberg, 1959). Previously the oral doctrine was held to be a late work of Plato in which he revealed his deepest insights, in encoded form, shortly before his death. Then Krämer claimed that the oral teachings accompanied Plato's literary work from a particular period, and furthermore that the oral teachings were the more decisive, fundamental, and important of the two. Konrad Gaiser also begins with this assumption; consequently, he accords to the dialogues only a "protreptic tendency" and calls them an "imitation of the teaching conversations" (p. 6).

The first and foremost goal of Gaiser's investigations is formed corresponding to this assumption. It is essential that he demonstrate the qualitative priority of the unwritten doctrine over the literary dialogues by showing "that in the effort to join together that which is individual and diverse with that which is whole and unified the unwritten doctrine goes beyond the presentation found in the dialogues and leads to a systematic connection of all separate knowledge" (p. 9). This critical test is moreover unavoidable in order to attain "knowledge of the principles of Being *in itself*" which "have fled the Logos and are preserved for an intuitive mystical experience" (p. 5). The tripartite division which is sketched out here refers to the sphere of Gaiser's work: The middle realm between the literary protreptic and the highest intuitive, that is non-conceptual, knowledge not only forms the systematic core of Platonic thought, but, as the subtitle of Gaiser's investigations indicates, is the institution and grounding of modern sciences and, as such, their systematic and historical root.

Gaiser divides his expositions into three parts:

1) Mathematics and Ontology: Here he intends to show that "for Plato [these stand] in a relation of mutual illumination and justification . . . in that the laws of Being [are to be] determined and described with the help of mathematics" while, on the other hand, through this relation mathematics is "first established as a systematically conducted science" (p. 14).

2) History and Ontology: The goal of this part is to demonstrate that Plato possesses a "decidedly historical consciousness" (p. 235), which was, for the most part, denied of him and of ancient thinking in general, and furthermore that Plato had developed an "ontologically grounded theory of the course of historical development (*ibid.*). The claim which, for Gaiser, follows this is that thereby history "is first founded in principle as science" (p. 289), and this, in turn, leads to

(3) Plato's place in the history of scientific thought: Here Gaiser defends the thesis that in making ontology scientific Plato "gave decisively important stimuli for the conscious foundation and expansion of the individual disciplines . . . , especially in the realm of mathematical science" (p. 14).

Gaiser's own investigations begin with the presentation and interpretation of the passage in the *Timaeus* (35a) on the composition of the world soul. The middle position of the world soul between identity ($\tauὰντόν$) and diversity ($θάτερον$) depends upon its unification of the properties of these two opposites within it. The opposition of identity and diversity is, according to Gaiser, not only a logical-categorical one, but finds its ontological counterpart in the opposition of idea and appearance. This connection is especially attested to by Aristotle (*De Anima* 404b. 16-27). The soul is constructed out of the elements as is the world of appearance, since – according to the testimony of Aristotle – for Plato like is only recognized by like. The living being itself ($αὐτὸ τὸ ζῶον$), however, is constructed out of the “idea of the one itself, of the primary length, width, and depth.” Aristotle then proceeds: “And in other words: the mind is one, and knowledge two . . . the number of the plane is opinion – three –, and the number of the cube is sensation – four” (p. 45).

Gaiser puts this all together as follows: “Aristotle finds herein a peculiar comparison, or identification of numbers (1-2-3-4), dimensions of space (unity-length-width-depth, or unity-line-surface-body), and faculties of knowing ($νοῦς-ἐπιστήμη-δόξα-αἴσθησις$)” (*ibid.*). This “sequence of dimensions,” as it will be called from now on, structures the already indicated realm of Being in itself. The realm of Ideas is structured by the sequence of numbers (One = the highest Idea), while the succession (unity-line-surface-body) hierarchically orders the world of appearance parallel to this. This means that the more regular and poorer in dimensions a figure is, the better it is, and the more dimensions it gains as it approaches the three-dimensional body, the worse it is.

Within the central antagonism, Idea (One, unity, number, identity) / Appearance (body, duality, diversity), the soul maintains its middle position insofar as, composed of line, it manifests its dimensional poverty in its derivation out of identity, while its flatness recalls its dimensionally rich bodiliness. In this combination the two powers, $\tauὰντόν$ and $θάτερον$, encounter each other: “The ‘other’ is ‘forced into’ the ‘same,’ which prevails over the ‘other’ without completely surmounting it” (p. 53).

It is reasonable to conceive the soul geometrically as surface in such a way because the world is mathematizable in the same way. The realm of the mathematical is ontologically-real, it is situated between the Idea-world and the sensuous-world and contains in itself, in concentrated form, the structure which rules in this whole. The relations of the diverse world can therefore be gathered more easily from this image (p. 91). However, this diversity is determined by the principle “opposition between determinateness and indeterminateness or between regularity and irregularity, for which mathematics as a ‘model’ is able to furnish a richly articulated system of possibilities” (p. 19). The following chart lists all of the realms of Being which are governed by the central antagonism of the first and second principles (and that means every realm) and which can be conceived through the structure of mathematics.

	First Principle	Second Principle
1. ontological	Being	Non-Being
2. formal logical (categorical)	identity (sameness) unity equality Being-in-itself limit formedness indivisibility	diversity (difference) multiplicity inequality relativity extension formlessness divisibility
3. values (axiological)	good (Arete) order	bad (Kakia) disorder
4. cosmological	Stasis: tranquility, constancy, life/divinity Demiurge: orderly formation	Kinesis: movement, change death/mortality Ananke: Lawless compulsion
5. psychological (epistemo- logical)	Nous-Episteme Logos: related to the Ideas	Doxa-Aisthesis Epithymia: drives, bodily-bound affects

Fig. 2 (p. 19)

In the final analysis, the thematic articulation of Gaiser's work is oriented to this chart. The effectiveness of both principles in ontology and logic has already been addressed. The outline above already lets us surmise how the logical-ontological realm in which the opposed principles are valid will be expanded by the introduction of the axiological realm. According to Gaiser, Plato had "oriented [his intentions] towards clarifying the question of mediation between the regions of Being (the world of ideas and the world of appearance) with respect to mathematical-geometrical dimensionality . . . especially in the *phenomenon of the 'geometrical middle'*" (p. 67). If one singles out the axiological aspect from this fundamental antagonism (Idea/Identity – Appearance/Diversity), then the opposition of good and evil can be "mediated" as a mere mathematical-geometrical problem of construction:

'Equality' and 'Inequality' can now be read off the forms square and rectangle: the one form remains equal in itself and has equal sides, the other however is arbitrary and undetermined, and has unequal sides. The side of the square is the geometrical 'middle' between the larger and smaller sides

of the rectangles; existing for itself it makes clear the unitary measure for the orderly and 'Good,' the norm of the Being of the Good and thus the Good in itself. (p. 76)

If ethics is in such a way *more geometrico demonstrata*,² then the decay of the soul (= surface) can also be "explained" by saying that "...when the soul of a living being loses the symmetry of its surface form (which is a consequence of its dependence upon the corporeal) it is differentiated from other souls of its type. The transition from *arete* to *kakia* occurs through this loss of form" (p. 141).

In the realm of surface (= soul) we are, so to speak, at the center of the conflict of the principles. While preserving its area the surface can lose the regularity of its form and be transformed into a rectangle of the same area and vice versa. The tranquil mediation between the two antagonistic opposites is then, in such a sphere, only a complicated question of the formation of a harmonious and geometrical middle. This, in any case, is the essential function of the different formations of the middle which Konrad Gaiser brings together and explains in a very fundamental and exhaustive inventory.

The real achievement of the geometrical middle consists only in some sort of description of possible mediations of very specific representations of form and content. For it is not good and evil which are mediated, but geometrical relations which have been identified with ethical categories via the connection of fundamental mathematization. The possibility of geometrical presentation is, of course, given and should not be disputed; however, it explains *absolutely nothing* with respect to the essence of form (and content, nor — as an axiological pendent — of good and evil). The question then arises as to what the acceptance of the unwritten doctrine accomplishes and what advantage it could have over the dialogues when it can only heap up examples of issues which are not further questioned. With this procedure the esoteric approach falls below the level of the early dialogues, for Socrates himself would not let rank beginners get away with the accumulation of paradigmatic phenomena.

Gaiser next extends the proof of the efficiency of his structures and mediations to include the micro- and macrocosmic, where they are merely able to contribute now and then to purely text immanent and sporadic illuminations, especially in relation to the world soul and elementary surface (*Timaeus*, 35b-36b). The universality of the presentation culminates in an enormous chart (Fig. 48, p. 170) the clarity of which leaves much to be desired, and the fundamental conception of which, however, can hardly be distinguished from the above mentioned chart (Fig. 2, p. 19). Gaiser's comment: "A look at the whole should serve to recall once again that Plato sets up the possibility of systematically establishing the intermediate stages and middle terms between the absolute 'One' and the 'Apeiron' via the ontological interpretation of the sequence of dimensions, and thereby proposes to construct the whole structure of reality out of the opposition of the two principles" (p. 171). Even though Gaiser's text follows this with the presentation and "principle classification" of different types of movement, we are now in a position to move on to a final critical evaluation of the first part of the text ("Mathematics and Ontology").

² Jürgen Mittelstrass entitled his review of this book "Ontologia More Geometrico Demonstrata." *Philosophische Rundschau*, 14 (1966), pp. 27-40.

That which applied in detail to the geometrical example is also fundamentally correct about the function of geometry. It is correct to say that Plato's ontology is formed around the struggle of Being and Non-Being. It is also correct to say that mediations must be sought between these two extremes. However, Gaiser only gives an account of examples of mediations that are mere constructions. The additional difficulty with the mathematical examples is then that they only simplify everything. They only give the appearance of concreteness because they are capable of bringing abstract relations into view spatially. Gaiser found this easy accountability to be an advantage, but what in the model lets itself be accounted for more easily? The essence of the issue does not become clearer in the paradigm, and one who is seeking *arete* of the soul certainly will not be aided by the information that the soul must become as similar as possible to a square. What importance must Gaiser himself assign to such a procedure in his own tripartite division of Plato's philosophy? He claimed that it was necessary to reconstruct the unwritten doctrine in order to overcome the "protreptic tendency" of the exoteric dialogues. However, what he offers is only illustrative material and a procedure which "explains" everything and therefore nothing at all, that gives mere examples of the form/content antagonism, and that only accomplishes a systematic inventory and reconstruction based upon models as the quotation from p. 171 (see above) confirms. Consequently, Gaiser's tripartite division of Platonic philosophy ought to be stood on its head: the presentation of the world in models is protreptic, reminding us of the necessity to go to the basics of the mediation of Being and Non-Being, of Good and Evil, without even beginning this undertaking itself. In the literary dialogues the mathematical examples serve only as a sporadic clarification, and they are thus means to an end and not ends in themselves. The dialogues, which Gaiser disavows, begin where he, with mere conjectures about "intuitive knowledge", has long since ended (p. 5).

The expressed goal of the second part of the text was to demonstrate that Plato possessed historical consciousness and proceeded from the historical relativity of knowing. In the myth of the *Politikos* the historical process is characterized through the sequence of the following stations. For a certain time the entire cosmos is guided by God. During this period the world finds itself in the most complete motion, turning regularly about itself on its own power. However, as soon as God relinquishes control, the cosmos is no longer determined by this "good motion," but by the power which emanates from the body and tends toward chaos. This leads to the fall of the orderly rotation into fluctuation, until finally, just before disorder can take control and threaten world decline, God once again takes control, saves regularity and world, but then feels once again compelled to leave the world to itself.

The "separation of divine *Nous* from the world soul," that is, the "turning away of the guiding God" (p. 207), which we have already described, causes a general *Ataxia* in that the completed rotary motion slips into forgetfulness (*λήθη*). The cosmos becomes sick, and only the intervention of God prevents the total, final decay. How then does human history, which "mimetically corresponds to cosmic events" (p. 210), take shape? In the time of divine control the cosmos and humanity find themselves "outside of time." Men vegetate without having any physical needs; nevertheless, one hesitates to call this condition happy since "it is doubtful that they troubled themselves with philosophic

knowledge which is the basis of human happiness" (p. 210 and *Politikos* 272b-d). The paradise-like condition is ended by the progressive cosmic decay, natural catastrophies make human beings work so that they must develop skills (*τέχναι*) to overpower and master an inhospitable reality. The consequence of this is the cultivation of political reflection and finally the rise of a philosophical knowledge. The further cosmos decays, the higher culture and science develop. However, "the desires which are tied to the body" (p. 254), which need direction, also increase. High culture is confronted with moral-ethical decadence, "the highest human *Arete* and the worst *Kakia*" become "possible first in a highly advanced stage of historical development" (p. 254).

The mimetic orientation of human history to cosmic history goes further still. States are subjected to a destiny similar to that of the cosmos. Sooner or later they are released from divine rule. Dissolution and perversion of former virtues are the counterparts of technical and military success. "Genuine freedom" is converted into anarchy and licentiousness, as can be seen in the example of Athens. "Good rule" deteriorates into arbitrary despotism and slavery, as happened in Persia. Gaiser concludes his presentation of the Platonic view of history with a careful and not uninteresting account of the duration of the individual historical phases of the earth and culture. In doing this he relies upon the so-called marriage number (*Republic*, 546b-d) and brings forth a credible suggestion for overcoming its mysteriousness.

This second part, "History and Ontology," does not so easily fit the title of the book. In lengthy sections Gaiser reviews myths from the written doctrine, though he makes use of his trusty esoteric key where he interprets; that is, he relates to the course of history with its turns of Good and Evil by means of two principles in the manner indicated in the chart (Fig. 2, p. 19). In this he believes that he recognizes the fundamental implication of the Platonic view of history in an all-encompassing science of Being and, at the same time, sees in this the principle foundation of history as science.

Furthermore, Gaiser had announced the proof "that not only the world, but also the knowledge of the world, therefore even philosophy itself, is historically conditioned" (p. 31, and similarly here and there). Historical conditionedness is due to the fact that, as just described, cultural development and philosophical knowledge appear late, at the time of barren cosmic decay, and that they develop themselves gradually. From this it follows that: "... the individual remains bound to the historical conditions and experiences of his time and his surroundings. We see here again the unique interrelation between philosophic reflection on history and the consciousness that the philosophic knowledge of men is itself historically conditioned" (p. 288).

The statement that history and living conditions sometimes provide a better and sometimes a worse climate for intellectual work and thereby determine the preconditions for the results of thought would be a trivial one. "Historical conditionedness of knowledge" really says that the *contents* of knowledge are subject to historical, sociological, and economic transformations. However, Gaiser hardly intended to make such a claim. The scientific view of history which he imputes to Plato is a purely normative one. It serves as an instrument in judging when history goes astray and when it does not — where the high and low points set in. Whether or not this forms the foundations of modern historical sciences is not to be discussed. How far the dependence of the individual upon these

fundamental tendencies goes, that is, how far there exists historical determinism, remains rather unclear in Gaiser's expositions. However that may be, he starts from the assumption that only Plato could reach "the elevation of human knowledge to the level of the divine" (p. 229). Yet Plato often contradicts the thought that mankind, in its thought and deeds, is bound by the circumstances of its time. In the Myth of Er (*Republic*, 614d) the unconditional self-responsibility of mankind even for the choice of life in the beyond is accentuated.

Gaiser's understanding of what constitutes Plato's scientificity is summarized in the third and final part, which reflects the previous results. The demonstration of this "scientificity" was an essential, perhaps the most essential, goal of his work. The "unwritten doctrine" was reconstructed toward this end, from which Gaiser anticipated the systematic-scientific illumination which, because Plato is the inventor of this scientificity, can unequivocally guarantee our understanding of Plato. The question whether one does Plato any service with such an undertaking is omitted, and for this reason the deficiencies and uses of our scientificity remain unreflected as well.

We have seen that the scientific systematization of the esoteric teachings in part does not attain to the dialectic of the dialogues. If one follows through with this thought, then the relationship between advanced scientificity and all alleged protreptic is finally reversed. The counter-model would then be that in the period of the middle dialogues and of the Academy, Plato's construction of the so-called theory of Ideas was nothing other than a meta-theoretical duplication of the dialectic of the early dialogues.³ The "invention" of Ideas is then the introduction of an image-bound aid for the clarification of the abstract object of the Socratic question "what is it?" with which his contemporaries had difficulty. However, the introduction of a model of the matter at stake only led to the object of science being eclipsed and the academic discussion holding fast only to this model. In this way, the subsequent systematization lost the character of a protreptic aid and became its own end. In his seventh letter, Plato unsuccessfully sought to halt this development.

Aristotle's systematizing inventory was then later hailed as the beginning of science. The Socratic question and its dialogical realization went astray in a thicket of theories and models concerning an issue of which Aristotle had already lost sight. Gaiser makes this defect a virtue through his demonstration that already even Plato was only concerned with a system. In the meanwhile, this system had established itself so firmly that Gaiser does not waste any words about its usefulness. Thereby, however, science too almost lost its object. Even the question of Being succumbs to the reasonable self-limitation of science, for Gaiser pushes it into the region of intuitive-mystical experience (p. 5). What is mystical, however, seems to be his unreflective relation to modern scientificity, which hovers over Plato like a divine criterion.

Gaiser conceived the esoteric systematic also as an aid in reaching the "intuitive," as a "systematically mediating instance" (p. 5). But, if from the outset the real object of science is relegated to the mystical, then can science do anything but display its own structures and arrange tautologies?

³ Compare Thomas Gerstmeyer "(Er-)Kenntnis und Erkenntnis bei Platon," Dis. Berlin, 1980.

HERMANN LÜBBE, ED., *WOZU PHILOSOPHIE?*
STELLUNGNAHMEN EINES ARBEITSKREISES

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Lewis E. Hahn

Why Philosophy? is a joint product of a work group on "The Role and Function of Philosophy". A grant from the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, a private foundation, enabled each of the participants to concern himself with this question for intervals of one half year during the period from 1974 to 1977. The volume consists of a foreword by Hermann Lübbe, a bibliography on "The Role and Function of Philosophy" prepared by Jürgen Christian Regge, and sixteen lectures printed in the order in which they were delivered.

Although a few guests or visiting professors from France, Great Britain, and the United States participated in the work group's discussions, all but one of the authors represented in the volume are from western European German-speaking lands; and they come from a wide range of different institutions of higher education. Their interests are quite broad and include a little of everything, from the standard philosophical disciplines and historical figures to philosophy of history, history and philosophy of science, linguistic philosophy, philosophical anthropology, and philosophy of sport. The range of approaches touched on or represented in the book include those of Neo-Kantian critical philosophy, existential and phenomenological philosophy, hermeneutics, Marxism, objective idealism, pragmatism, and analytic philosophy. Several participants, moreover, are editors of such noteworthy philosophical publications as *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, *Philosophische Rundschau*, *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, *Wissenschaftliche Paperbooks*, and *International Studies in Philosophy*. Our authors, then, are an unusually knowledgeable set of philosophers favorably situated for a broad inquiry into the nature and function of philosophy; and they have some fresh light to shed on some perennial philosophic concerns.

Before commenting on the essays, however, I should say that Regge's very helpful bibliography covers mainly the period from 1945 to 1977. It provides more than ample coverage of this period, but one wonders, in view of the many works on the future of philosophy he includes, why in Item 36 he does not mention Vol. 4 of the *Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy*, which has a section on this topic. This material is as relevant as the first two volumes of the *Proceedings* which he does include.

I will turn first to Hermann Lübbe, who resides in Zwingli's birthplace, Einsiedeln, Switzerland, and specializes in Political Philosophy at the University of Zürich. He is a past president of the *Allgemeine Gesellschaft für Philosophie in Deutschland*, an organization which promotes philosophy in universities and society, cooperates with other philosophical societies, publishes the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* and the previously mentioned *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, conducts meetings and organizes congresses, and supports other significant philosophical activities.

His paper on "Why Philosophy? Aspects of a Vexing Question" is an unusually rewarding one with, among other things, its mixture of interesting historical background material on the role and status of philosophy, past and present, in the German-speaking countries, his insights into philosophy's efforts to achieve cultural self-intelligibility, his characteristic provision of numerous examples to illustrate his points, practical advice on how a philosophy department may conduct itself in competition with other departments for funds, illuminating parallels between history and philosophy with reference to the relevance question or why this or that discipline, his treatment of the distinction between esoteric and exoteric philosophy and the primacy of the former, and suggestive comments on philosophy as the art of clarifying through asking questions and counterquestions on the orientation conditions of our theoretical, moral, political, and other praxes.

Lübbe and his collaborators recognize that although normally scientists as a group try to answer questions as to how there is evidence for something rather than ones pertaining to what their science is good for, it is more characteristic of philosophy and history to ask "Why philosophy or history?". And on such special occasions as inaugural lectures, rector's advisory addresses, or experiments at self representation, he asserts that philosophers apparently feel impelled to express themselves on the question "Why philosophy?" (127). Indeed, moreover, speaking practically, the educational-political position of philosophy depends in the final instance on how good an answer its representatives know how to give to the question "Why is the study of philosophy in general good?" (128-29).

The opening essay by Rüdiger Bubner, who concentrates on History of Philosophy at the Eberhard-Karls-University in Tübingen, is a challenging and enlightening one with nine main theses and a thrust toward relying upon the history of philosophy for a better understanding of the question. Familiar to English-reading audiences through his 1980 *Modern German Philosophy*, he is editor of *Philosophische Rundschau* and of numerous volumes in *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*.

In his essay he asks what philosophy can and should do and what it dares to do. He starts by asserting that philosophy finds itself in a continuing crisis of legitimatizing itself (1), the contemporary form of which stems from the nineteenth century, but maintains that history shows that this crisis is not fatal in this instance. Wherever philosophy is, the Why-philosophy question follows it like a shadow (2). And against those who complain that philosophers, unlike scientists, do not agree he asserts that the tradition of different answers to a question like our present one serves to demonstrate the regenerative capacity of philosophy (6).

In the second essay Friedrich Kambartel, who teaches at the University of Konstanz and is known for his interest in Frege and Wittgenstein and his work in Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Language, and Ethics, provides some suggestive observations on the question which was also the title of his 1968 inaugural lecture at the University of Konstanz, "Was ist und soll Philosophie?": that is, the question of what philosophy is and should be. For philosophy now, he thinks, considerations of pragmatic relevance of statements have replaced older concerns with representations or images of things; and philosophy properly has gone from being a handmaiden to theology to being one for science. He appears to hold that philosophy serves society, and properly so, in furthering science through promoting an enlarged understanding of its operations. (17-20)

Another rewarding essay is one by Robert Spaemann, Emeritus Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy at the University of Salzburg, Professor of Philosophy at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, and Professor of Ethics at the University of Stuttgart. It is a clear, forceful, and eminently readable account of the strife among philosophers. As he sees it, philosophers argue without persuading any except those who already agree. They come out categorically with positions flatly contradicted by other systems, and one wonders who is right. Indeed, they differ so widely that they cannot even agree on what philosophy is. (91) Their characteristic mode of expression, moreover, is not the dialogue but rather the monologue (94).

According to Spaemann, "philosophy does not *have* a relevance or underlying-principle crisis: it *is* the institutionalized relevance of underlying-principle crisis". In it the original naivete of thinking asserts itself as over against its own models, paradigms, and methods. Thus the strife between philosophers would seem to turn into a more or less rational battle of world views, an ideological dispute. (92) In view of all this a definite final agreement of philosophers is not to be hoped for (97).

The situation is made even worse by the fact that both Descartes and Spaemann appear to insist that in regard to practice we cannot act without certainty and that hypotheses will not suffice for justification of action (91). And I agree that in practical action a decision must be made; but this can be and is done without certainty. And is acting on the basis of probabilities all that bad? Even world views, I should think, can be fruitfully interpreted as hypotheses. But, of course, when it comes time to act, I should expect Spaemann to insist, there can be no temporizing: a decision must be made.

Is there, then, no possibility of rational discourse among philosophers? Is there no way out? Spaemann answers that there is a way out if and only if rationality is viewed as a characteristic of individual persons, as a virtue, and not as a structure detached from persons (103). This virtue involves consciousness of the particularity of one's own starting point and good will (104-5) as well as readiness to discuss philosophy with representatives of each position; and thus Spaemann finds in the practice of this virtue hope for unity in philosophy (106).

Manfred Riedel, Director of the Institute for Philosophy at the Friedrich Alexander University in Erlangen-Nuremberg and well known for his work on Hegel among other things, has written an erudite and challenging paper on a topic about which he had some misgivings (259), "Philosophizing toward the 'End of Philosophy'?" In spite of his reservations, however, he ties in the Why-

philosophy question with this topic, explains that the question of what the end of philosophizing is is a teleological one, sets forth the means-goal-rationality entailed in such questions, and then indicates that the action of philosophizing in principle can be defined through its use of prior expectations of its relevance and its employment of these expectations as conditions or means of reaching rationally sought goals. (259-60) He next, through a historical survey from Thales through Kant, Hegel, and Marx to Adorno and Habermas makes clear that the Why question and the one as to the end of philosophizing are not ones that make their first appearance in our time. (260-63)

The central portion of this paper (263-82) is devoted to an analysis in terms of eight theses of the institutional conditions of philosophizing in a scientific age or, more briefly put, of philosophy as institution. What is the role of thinking, reflection, investigation, in a scientific age? The answers may be given in terms of philosophy as institution, and beginning with philosophizing as one science among many in the larger framework of science, and drawing upon a rich store of knowledge in the sociology of science as well as acquaintance with major figures in the history of philosophy, Riedel presents analyses of a fascinating array of problems ranging from ones in the sociology of knowledge and the science of sociology through the division of labor among the sciences, how philosophizing institutionalizes itself professionally, the democratization of the sciences, the role of the various specialities within philosophy (for example, he treats logic, hermeneutics, philosophy of scientific method, and history of philosophy as preparatory studies for various of the specialized sciences, 267-68), the praxis inherent in reflection, philosophizing as reflection as involving something more than what accrues to it as one science among many, bondage to science and the alternative of rehabilitating philosophizing as a specific ability or knowing which can orient it to its end, and the different relations of scientific and philosophical investigations to language, to philosophizing as clarification and analytic-hermeneutic reflection on concepts with the goal of justifying basic acceptance of a historical culture in an age of science.

His concluding section (282-86) treats the role of linguistic reflection in justifying basic acceptance of a historical culture in a scientific age, and he maintains that three conditions must be met if one is to be properly prepared for basic acceptance of a fundamental concept: (1) freedom from contradiction, (2) knowledge of the hermeneutic implications of the concept or the history of the concept, and (3) verification of existing states of affairs.

Another lively and suggestive paper is that by Hans Lenk, Director of the Institute for Philosophy of Karlsruhe University and President of the International Philosophic Society for the Study of Sports. He is known for his interdisciplinary emphasis and his work on theory of science, logical constants, meta-logic and speech analysis, philosophy in a technical age, and the sociology and social psychology of sport. Some readers of English may be familiar with his books on *Social Philosophy of Athletics* and *Team Dynamics*. I should guess his students have no difficulty staying awake in his classes. His topic is "Philosophy as Focus and Forum: On the Role of a Pragmatic Philosophy".

In an opening section he deplores the negative image philosophy has today and chides various of his collaborators in this volume for their pessimistic diagnoses of the current state of philosophy: for example, Robert Spaemann for his

characterization of philosophy as "the outcome of an arrested state of puberty" (38). He goes on to assert that only absolutistic philosophy has come to an end; there are plenty of new demands and problems for philosophy and its cognitive, cultural, intellectual, and political functions (43). He then proceeds to outline the grounds for his optimism about revitalizing practical philosophy, after which he states ten theses on pragmatic philosophy with numerous cross references to ones who agree or disagree with him and many helpful suggestions as to what philosophy can and should do: for example, formulate and analyze bridging principles for uniting theoretical knowledge and normative rules of action, bring scientific knowledge and life praxis to bear on philosophic problems, cooperate with specialized scientists in the solution of both disciplinary and interdisciplinary problems, and work more to make philosophizing efficacious for social problems rather than mainly to legitimize it for philosophers.

Hans Michael Baumgartner, Professor at the Center for Philosophy and Foundations of Science of Justus Liebig University in Giessen and Editor of *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, as the twelfth lecturer, puts the question more sharply as "Why still Philosophy?". Instead of offering another direct attempt to answer the question concerning the import, role, and function of philosophy, however, which question he thinks really contains several undifferentiated queries, he tries to provide a framework for careful consideration of some of its not fully answered dimensions. His analysis does not aim at systematic completeness but rather at different possible intents of the Why-philosophy question and at the heterogeneity of the corresponding argumentation hypotheses backing up the various intents. (240) He holds that there should be a place for both positive and negative answers; and instead of the single Why question, he suggests five questions which he discusses briefly but so as to throw much fresh light on the general topic.

1. Why philosophy at all? (242-44)
2. Why still philosophy today? (244-6)
3. Why philosophy in view of science? (246-50)
4. What about the role and function of philosophy in social process? Why philosophy as a society of philosophers within a highly complex industrial society? Are philosophical ideas important both for the existence of the individual and the community of expectations of society? (249-53)
5. Why philosophy in the university? (253-57)

At least two of our remaining participants are quite sceptical with reference to one or more of the affirmations of other participants. For example, Odo Marquard, Professor at the Center for Philosophy and Foundations of Science of Justus Liebig University in Giessen and known for his work on Kant's sceptical method, offers some sceptical reflections on the situation of philosophy which lead him to ask "Why the Why-philosophy question?" (73) He had observed in an earlier paper that we pursue philosophy toward the end of philosophy because it finally is competent only for avowing its own incompetence (72).

Carl Friedrich Gethmann, who teaches Logic and Philosophy of Science in the General College of the University of Essen and directs the Inventory of Publications for a project group concerned with the pragmatics of argumentation in scientific communities, shares certain of Odo Marquard's misgivings with respect to reasons previously advanced to justify philosophizing and entitles his lecture, "Is Philosophy as Institution Necessary?". But he concedes that an affirmative answer to his question may be given if philosophy has the delegated

responsibility of serving as institutional critic. (306-8) And he maintains that institutionalization of institutional criticism is the only alternative to permanent revolution (308). He concludes with a section on Philosophy as Institution in which he offers some perceptive observations on philosophizing in the context of a philosophy department in a science university: for example, to mention only two, on the aims of learning to philosophize and the need for double competence on the part of philosophers (308-12).

Jürgen Mittelstrass, Professor of the Philosophy and History of Science at Konstanz University, presents a clear and provocative lecture on "Philosophy or Theory of Science?". He discusses the possibility of a methodical and normative discussion of foundational questions of scientific theory and finds Logic and Ethics valuable portions of philosophy. But for speculative metaphysics he has no use.

Hermann Krings is Professor at the Institute for Philosophy of the University of Munich, a director of the Bavarian Academy of Science, Editor of *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, and Director of the Commission for Editing the Writings of Schelling. His lively discussion of the esoteric and the exoteric in philosophy serves as a point of departure for various of the other essays. His emphasis is clearly on the esoteric. Esoterically, he says, "we can be rationalists, analysts, positivists, sceptics, transcendental philosophers, Marxists, phenomenologists, and many others", whereas "exoteric can mean totalitarianism, anarchy, despotism, private capitalism, technocracy, and many other things" (151). He has some misgivings about the question concerning the Role and Function of Philosophy today.

Rainer Specht is Director of the Faculty for Philosophy of the University of Mannheim, and he concentrates on History of Philosophy and History of Science. His paper is concerned with the metaphysical function of philosophy, and contrary to many of his collaborators, he holds that philosophical positions operate with deep theory in the sense of metaphysics. If philosophy aims to be critical, he argues, it needs to concern itself with deep theory; but he claims that the latter does not always have social relevance.

Walther Ch. Zimmerli, known for his work on Hegel, Habermas, and the Frankfurt School, has some interesting observations on the topic, "Division of Labor Philosophy?". Taking the concept of division of labor from Adam Smith, he applies it to the question of the Role and Function of Philosophy.

Joseph J. Kockelmans, whose areas of concentration in the Department of Philosophy at Pennsylvania State University are Philosophy of Science and Modern and Contemporary Philosophy, is the only participant from outside the western German-speaking lands. He has written extensively on existential philosophy and phenomenology and has been a leader in interdisciplinary education. For this volume he offers some clear and insightful thoughts on the question, Why philosophy? In speaking of what philosophy is, nearly all have related it to science, but Kockelmans relates it to religion as well, and like various others, he emphasizes the history of philosophy, maintaining that "the answer to a philosophically relevant question consists in the authentic answer of a thinker on what in the history of philosophy has already come to him" (218). In commenting on the question, Why philosophy? he says that it is ambiguous and explains in some detail why this is so: for example, to mention only three reasons, the

different meanings given it by different categorial systems; the diverse interpretations of it as art, science, or discipline; and the many contexts in which it can be considered. In a final section he has some interesting reflections on discussions between vocational philosophers and on certain problems in communication.

Norbert Hinske, whom many know for his work on Kant, is Professor of Philosophy and Chairman at the University of Trier, and Editor of *International Studies in Philosophy*. His lecture has the intriguing title of "The Beloved with the Many Faces", and his presentation is as appealing as the title. In the first part alone he gives seven different kinds of answer to the question of what philosophy is, each in terms of a variety of definition: instrumental, thematic, programmatic, methodological, and impulse definitions, not to mention definitions in terms of types and potentials. Small wonder our beloved philosophy has so many faces!

The concluding essay of the volume, on "Role and Function of Philosophy", was written by Gerd Brand, a well known phenomenologist and at the time Vorstand of the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, and in spite of the fact that fifteen others of the work group preceded him, he still managed to say some fresh things about the much discussed topic. This is illustrated in the first two sections of his paper where he treats of the starting place of philosophy and the ways of putting the question, two of the most difficult of philosophical problems.

To sum up, then, *Wozu Philosophie?* affords an excellent sampling of the work of a number of leading philosophers who write in German. And for diversity of outlook and general high quality of philosophizing on a perennially important topic this group of essays on the role and function of philosophy seems to me well worth sharing with readers of English.

CONSTITUTION OF THE BEING OF MIND

A Review Article on

Hans Wagner, *Philosophie und Reflexion*

Munich/Basel: Ernst Reinhardt, 1959/1967. 423 pp.

James G. Hart

Hans Wagner, presently and quite by historical accident the editor of the post-humous writings of Richard Höningwald, arrived at views and concerns akin to those of Höningwald and his student Wolfgang Cramer independently of any tutelage by the former (whom he never met) and apart from his friendship with the latter. Historians of ideas have ample matter for reflection when they come upon the oblivion to which this philosophical trio has been consigned. It is, indeed, puzzling how works of such sustained philosophical energy have attracted so little interest. It is not as if these writings were born out of season. Höningwald's major writings appeared during Husserl's last twenty years. Those of Wagner and Cramer appeared when Husserl's students, to a large extent, dominated the post-war scene in West Germany. While appreciating more than do the Munich-Göttingen students of Husserl (as Conrad-Martius and Ingarden) the mind as constituting the world as it appears, Höningwald and his students, nevertheless, offered reasons immanent to transcendental reflection which justified the ontological direction of these early students of Husserl. And while appreciating as much as the Freiburg Husserl students (for example, Heidegger, Fink, and Landgrebe) the contextuality and facticity of subjectivity, they challenged the view that absence as such, facticity as such, could do the job of ultimate philosophical elucidation. Furthermore, these writings uniquely bridge the concerns of the post-war philosophical terrain and the present landscape's cultivation of, for example, proto-phenomenological and phenomenological analyses (of Frege, Brentano, Meinong and early Husserl), the Anglo-American linguistic approaches, and the renewed study of German Idealism.

The work reviewed here is doubtless one of the most impressive systematic efforts of the second-half of the twentieth century. It is so rich in more or less peripheral discussions that a litany of at least some of them is called for: tightly outlined theories of aesthetics and political philosophy; an examination of the material non-formal axiology (of Scheler and Hartmann) in the light of some

Kantian principles which it rejected; excellent critical discussions of perspectival and hermeneutical philosophy as well as of Heideggerian themes; a study of the relationship of scientific theory to its referent ("nature") as well as an examination of the skeptical posture of the theoretician of this relationship in contrast to the typical progressive realistic tendencies of the scientist immersed in research; finally, a sketch of a philosophical theology which culminates the work. These and other discussions are woven around central themes to which we may now turn. In addition to a detailed table of contents Wagner has supplied the reader with helpful summaries at various stages of the work (149-50, 163, 318-20, 367, 398, 410-11).

I. Noematic vs. merely Noetic Reflection

Philosophical reflection begins with a loss of the naivety of the view that the mind is a piece of the world and within the world like other worldly things. Reflection approaches philosophical maturity when the insight is reached that one is responsible for the views one has of the world. In this work there is a sustained suspicion toward Husserl's transcendental reduction (see, for example, 56-60, 330ff). For Wagner, Husserl's transcendental reduction is only a type of transcendental reflection. Husserl's reflection is directed toward the noema merely as a content of the constituting streaming noeses. But thereby does Husserl's claim that nothing is lost in the reduction lose its credibility. Genuine noematic reflection, something Wagner believes Husserl lost sight of, on the other hand, reveals the two-fold aspect of the noema: It is a content which is the result of creative, constituting acts of a subject; furthermore, this content has an aspect of a claim, or a legitimacy (*Geltung*) in that it is tied to *being* and claims to obtain, to hold, or to be valid for what is the case in itself and not merely as a result of the constituting activity of the subject. Wagner and Cramer doubtless have found an unjustified predilection in Husserl's favoring noetic-constitutional analyses. Wagner's way of putting this is to say that for Husserl the noema comes to be merely a result of noetic activities. Noematic reflection highlights not only the noetic, constituting activity of the mind, but it also does justice to the ontological pull of the "object", that is, of the *being* which is presented to the mind: The object as being is a presenced presence the sense of which is not exhausted in its being present to the mind; the noema is a production by the mind of what itself is not a product of the mind. As Wolfgang Cramer noted in his excellent review of this work of Wagner, if we keep object and being (in-itself) separate we can avoid thinking of the noema as an object referring to an object and rather think of the noema as an object made determinate by the constituting activity of the mind. These resultant determinations make the claim to hold for *what is*, conceived as mind-independent. Or, in another formulation by Cramer, the noema has an "is"-claim produced by the mind. This does not mean the mind produces what is there but rather the thought or noema that it is.¹

In subsequent years variations of this theory of the noema have been pro-

¹ Wolfgang Cramer, Review of Hans Wagner, *Philosophie und Reflexion*, *Philosophische Rundschau*, 11 (1963), 71-72; Wolfgang Cramer, *Grundlegung einer Theorie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann: 1957/1975), §26.

posed independently by several authors.² In each case there is at least an implicit critique of Husserl's transcendental idealism and reduction. For Husserl, the noema is the object as that unifying same which is constituted through the profiling appearances which themselves may be envisaged as constituting acts. This contrasts with Wagner's theory that the noema makes reference to being-in-itself. (Whether Husserl completely lost sight of the legitimacy-claim (*Geltungsanspruch*) of the noema will be briefly touched upon below; see also n. 7.) How, within the transcendental reduction, can one distinguish the object from being-in-itself? How can one enjoy the reference of the noema as something distinct from the noema without sliding in and out of the natural attitude?³ It is clear for Wagner and Cramer that within the transcendental reduction the noema's reference to being-in-itself cannot be disclosed. And in so far as the reduction is regarded as a suspension of belief in the being of the world it is a philosophical disaster. In order to focus the issues this reviewer will first suggest Husserl's case for the reduction in terms immanent to Wagner's own thought; and then (in §II) I will pursue what I take to be the most fundamental issue raised by Wagner (and Cramer) against Husserl.

First of all, the sense in which the reduction "brackets" the reality of the being in the world of the natural attitude must be determined by Husserl's own claim (or desire) that it does not lose anything of what it "brackets" (and therefore there might be something wrong with the interpretation if it appears that the legitimacy-claim (*Geltungsanspruch*) is indeed lost). A close study reveals that the reduction at its most radical level uncovers an ineluctable and ineradicable belief process, that of primal *doxa*. At this level the mind cannot help but constitute being and cannot constitute mere non-being.⁴ But this founding stratum of being-belief of the primal streaming remains hidden unless the very act-life of the mind is "reduced" and its constitution becomes a theme. In such a view the reduction alone reveals the most fundamental legitimacy-claim of the noema.

Furthermore, Husserl would ask Wagner how he saves the act-life of the mind from the status of a merely empirical process and how to claim for it a transcendental status by virtue of its inseparability from noematic reflection and by declaring this reflection *per definitionem* to be transcendental. (See 50-52.) In other words, can the distinguishing features of the transcendental as such be determined by establishing the validity-claim of the noema and the ingredients of noematic reflection? Must not the issue of the unique ("apodictic") evidence

² D. Føllesdal, "Husserl's Notion of the Noema", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 66 (1969), 680-87; Herbert Dreyfus, "The Perceptual Noema: Gurwitsch's Crucial Contribution", *Life-World and Consciousness* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 135-170; Guido Küng, "The World as Noema and as Referent", *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 3 (1972), 15-26; Hans-Ulrich Hoche, *Handlung, Bewußtsein und Leib: Vorstudien zu einer rein noematischen Phänomenologie* (Freiburg/Munich: Alber, 1973); this last author seems to leave no space for noetic-constitutional analyses; compare his "Husserls Phänomenonbegriff im Lichte sprachanalytischen Philosophierens", *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, 8 (1979), 65-90.

³ See Richard H. Holmes, "An Explication of Husserl's Theory of the Noema", *Research in Phenomenology*, V (1975), 143-53.

⁴ Compare Elizabeth Stroker, "Das Problem der EPOCHÉ in der Philosophie Edmund Husserl", *Analecta Husserliana*, I (1970), 170-85.

of this realm be a theme?

When Wagner grants that philosophy is intrinsically bound up with reflection and that the world's views are inseparable from our (constituting) views of the world, what techniques, what steps, are necessary that the mind have for its theme the noetic and noematic ingredients of these beliefs and these views? How is the "vector" of the mind directed from the world to the appearances as such of the world so that its task is sorting out the legitimacy-claims as such, the constitutional strands as such, and their essential interrelation, unless the legitimacy-claims are relieved of their obviousness and immediacy?

Finally, when we no longer are taken up with beliefs as that which we believe, but with them *as* correlates of constituting *acts* of belief, is there not a modification of the original non-reflective belief (as what we believe)? Surely when we attend to our beliefs as acts what we believe is modified; instead of looking at the *tree* I attend to my *looking* at the tree. Similarly, to entertain validity-claims as such with respect, for example, to the tree I perceive, is not itself the straightforward submission to this claim of the pre-reflective attitude. But neither is it to challenge, deny, or doubt it; is it not to put it "in quotes", "in brackets"?

Even if Wagner and Cramer could be persuaded to concur with these suggestions on behalf of the transcendental reduction, there is a more fundamental objection which they address to Husserl and his repeated use of the reduction for the sake of purely noetic analyses.

II. Ontological and Noetic Constitution

A basic premise of Wagner's philosophy of reflection is that the validity-aspect of the noema enables the claim that the mind intends (means) something which is not merely a result constituted by intentionality. This is at the heart of Wagner's thought and both he and Cramer believe that its oversight spells the ultimate failure of transcendental phenomenology as a philosophy. Transcendental phenomenological reflection as constitution-analysis would not seem to be constitutive of what it analyzes. It seems Husserl's claims on behalf of "immanent objects" (acts and sensa), for example that they are adequately given and thereby proffer apodictic evidence, or of inner-time consciousness, that it constitutes the temporal unity of acts and sensa, are a result of a non-constituting act of reflection.⁵ The significance, therefore, of the eidetic analysis of the apodictic realm of constituting subjectivity is that we arrive at essential deter-

⁵ Eugen Fink wrestled with this issue in the presence of Husserl. See the forthcoming work in the Husserliana series, *VI^e Meditation*, with Husserl's notes and comments. Husserl's ultimate position seems to be: Although there are universal structures that belong to the transcendental *I* whether it reflects on them or not, there is no way we can renounce the constituted-constituting schema. With appropriate reflection the in-itself always turns out to be a result, the for-itself the prior principle — not the other way around. On the other hand, one of the crowning achievements of the disclosure of the ultimate primal streaming "living present" is the coincidence of being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Here we have the "absolute phenomenon", that is, a "noumenon". One of the most distinguished students of Husserl has made a point which lends support to the position of Wagner and Cramer: If we take the Greek sense of phenomenon as a correlate of perception, and if we take the stricter Husserlian sense as correlated with the immediate sensible presence, then Husserl's proper work as act-analysis does not deal with phenomena. Transcendental phenomenological reflection would therefore be a noumenology rather than a phenomenology. See Iso Kern, *Idea and Methode der Philosophie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 434.

minations of transcendental subjectivity *in itself*, i.e., at the ontological constituents of subjectivity and not as a result of subjectivity's determining *poesis*. This is a point made repeatedly by Cramer in almost all of his writings and occasionally by Wagner in this work (for example, 318 and 338).⁶

For Wagner, phenomenology's neglect of noematic reflection leaves it hovering. On the one hand, Husserl and some of his followers have advanced philosophy significantly with their uncovering of the ultimate facticity of subjectivity in the gossamer of originating temporality. In this Husserl and his disciples agree with and improve upon Hönigswald's basic position. But the latter's attention to the validity-claim of what this ultimate facticity constitutes enabled him to envisage subjectivity not merely as facticity but also as *principle*, or as Wagner puts it occasionally, as *subjectum veritatis* (367). Wagner charges Husserl with the reduction of all theory to pre-theory by reason of his locating the ultimate explanatory principle in the pre-predicative experience, i.e., the passive synthetic primal *doxa* of the originating time flow. If this primal streaming is the *origin*, the ultimate philosophical *principle*, we cannot distinguish the principle from that of which it is a principle. The primal pre-theoretical evidence might well be a necessary condition for the evidence of the principle which accounts for the world but it cannot be the sufficient condition or the ultimate explanatory dimension, i.e., a principle (331-38).⁷

Recently Robert Sokolowski has presented a similar move away from a tran-

⁶ A related issue here is whether Wagner's concept of noema only applies to transcendent spatial and temporal being. Because the noema of transcendent being is always further determinable, always present as a task, its reference to what-is-in-itself is corrigible (compare 94, 160, and 184). For Cramer (see *Grundlegung einer Theorie des Geistes*, §§31-32), however, transcendental reflection cannot, at least in some (indexical) senses of *I* and the act-life of the *I*, misfire. If an essential feature of noematic reflection is that it can misfire, and if it is always a constituted reference to being, then we have reason for holding that transcendental reflection is not noematic. Wagner, on the other hand, in spite of erecting his philosophy on the ultimacy and ineluctability of reflection and its ingredients (subject, act, noema as content and as validity-claim) argues, toward the conclusion of the book (chap. 32), for the necessity of doubting everything which lays claim to being a *knowing* (371). On the basis of the finitude of our knowing a universal skepticism is justifiable with respect to all philosophical claims, even though doubt with respect to the absolute ground of all thought and knowing (compare our discussion of this ground in the following §) negates itself. This chap. leaves the status of some of Wagner's basic principles in an unclear light for this reviewer.

⁷ See esp. Wagner's excellent review of Husserl's late work, "Critical Observations concerning Husserl's Posthumous Writings", in *The Phenomenology of Husserl*, ed. by R. O. Evelton (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1970), 204-58, esp. 245-55; "Kritische Bemerkungen zu Husserls Nachlaß", *Philosophische Rundschau*, I (1953-1954), 1-22 and 93-123, esp. 112-23. No one has better formulated the point of departure of Husserl's philosophical *theology*. Here it must suffice to say that in the primal "hyletic stream" it is precisely this coincidence of *Faktum* and *Eidos*, facticity and principle, contingency and necessity, irrationality and rationality which generates Husserl's theological reflections and provides the ultimate sense of what he called "last philosophy" of "metaphysics". The appended Note in §51 and §58 of *Ideas* I make it clear that for Husserl an ultimate and genuine explanatory principle cannot be found in the facticity of transcendental subjectivity but in a divine principle which 1) holds sway over the facticity of the primal flow and 2) accounts for the *de facto* validity (*Geltung*) of our knowledge of transcendent being. That there is this teleology and rationality in the realms of immanence and transcendence and that the claims to validity in the realm of transcendence are *de facto* substantiated — these are a constant source of astonishment which compel theological reflections. Compare Iso Kern's pioneering research in *Husserl und Kant* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), 286-303; also his *Idee und Methode der Philosophie*, 333-40.

scendental idealist position by arguing that the presence of things in the world as well as the primal stream of presencings by which we enjoy these things involve a play of presence and absence, rest and motion, and sameness and difference. Whatever comes to presence, and in this sense whatever is, even the ultimate "dative of manifestation" of the primal streaming, i.e., the ultimate sense of *ego* and mind to which appears (*mibi*) world as the inclusive whole of what is, or can be, brought to presence, can only come to be because of these "principles" of presence and absence, sameness and difference, rest and motion, taken together. And these principles must be considered to be in-themselves and not by grace of or in conjunction with the dative of manifestation because these are what constitute ontologically this dative of manifestation in itself truly, and being is what is truthful in itself and not on a condition.⁸

Thus in Wagner, Cramer and Sokolowski the ancient view of Proclus is reaffirmed:

The principles do not get existence from concepts but from being. Where thought is sovereign, once the thought is removed the existence of what was conceived vanishes too. The principles are principles *per se* and not through our concepts.⁹

They all regard the transcendental turn as a necessary stage on the way to ontology. Once, however, the basic features of being are established through reflection on the being and achievements of the mind, an account of all possible and actual being is pursued. The dative of manifestation is left behind; it is in no way the condition of these principles but has become merely one of their exemplifications.

We may now turn to Wagner's unique move away from transcendental idealism to a theory of principles which claims for an ultimate principle *subjectivity*. This is not a transcendental phenomenological subjectivity, that is, the non-objectifiable dative of manifestation. Rather we are introduced to the principle "subjectivity" as the generic frame of whatever is.

III. The Absolute Principle of Predication

Wolfgang Cramer rightly observed that chapter 15 is the backbone of Wagner's book.¹⁰ To become appreciated by the mind being must be manifest through a

⁸ Robert Sokolowski, *Presence and Absence: A Philosophical Investigation of Language and Being* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), chapters 14-15; see esp. 169-79 and his "Ontological Possibilities in Phenomenology: The Dyad and the One, *Review of Metaphysics*, XXIX (1976), 691-701. The issue between Husserl and these thinkers has an historical precedent in Fichte's appropriation of the transcendental unity of apperception in his concept of a primal knowing (*Wissen*) in the 1804 *Wissenschaftslehre* and his attempt to show that this *Wissen* (compare the ultimate dative of manifestation of the primal streaming) enables the surmounting of the "higher realism" (such as proposed by Wagner, Cramer and Sokolowski).

⁹ *In Parm.* vi 23; cited in *Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. by A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 308.

¹⁰ Review of Hans Wagner, *Philosophie und Reflexion*, 74. In the second (1967) edition Wagner called attention to this review; he also singled out that of G. A. Schrader in the *Review of Metaphysics*, XV (1963), 68-70, to which the reader may refer for a discussion of some topics neglected here.

noema, become present to the mind, and thus determinate for the mind. Although without the mind's determining activity the being enjoys no manifest determinateness, nevertheless, predication presupposes that the task and achievement (judgment) of positing p of S is not a creating of the determinateness but rather that the being already possesses the determination. If it is without any determination in itself predication has no *task* and the drive of the mind is unmotivated (chap. 12).

Wagner's ambivalence toward phenomenology's analyses of passive synthesis (because they obfuscate the validity-claim of the Noema) urges him to neglect the passive synthetic "pre-predicative" motivational sources of predication and to concentrate on predication in its explicit formal-logical mode (93).¹¹ A motivation for Husserl's involvement in the web of passive syntheses is signaled in Wagner's own notion of *originating thinking*, i.e., not that which determines concepts (as ways of taking being or being as it is inherited, named and already so taken) but that which produces the determining concepts and which *a priori* goes in advance of all determinations and independent of sensation. Wagner pursues this not in an analysis of the reduced unmediated layers of passive associations which found apperceptions and thereby objects within contextual matrices, but rather in a meditation on the meaning and function of the first principles of (traditional, pre-Russell/Whitehead) formal logic (96-98 and chap. 13).

The essential features of predication (or the determination of being through the noema) are presented through an examination of the principles of identity, non-contradiction and excluded middle. The determinateness of the being-in-itself is its identity and this supplies the reason for the principle of non-contradiction.¹² In contradiction one is saying that the being is this and not this; this destroys its determinateness. However, besides the principle of *forbidden* contradiction Wagner proposes that of *required* contradiction (103). The determinateness of an individual predicate requires its distinction from all others, that is, requires what contradicts and excludes it. Thus the particular predicate presupposes the system or field of predicates. And in so far as this particular predicate is immersed in the network of conceptual moments, it carries along with it the contradiction of itself. The determinateness of the predicate is the condition for the contradiction and the contradiction is the condition for determinateness. Determinateness constitutes what contradicts and what contradicts constitutes what determines. This, states Wagner, is the major problem of "theoretical principles" and the basic problem of philosophical speculation. On the one hand, predication requires the exclusion of contradiction, on the other, predication of a is impossible without reference to non- a .

In order to resolve this issue Wagner introduces a (fourth) principle of limitation: A predicate a is determined in such a manner that it excludes and is in

¹¹ Yet when the object gets determined the issue remains whether the prior passive achievement of a determination or feature, as taking S as p , this is a tree, the tree as diseased, etc., itself is properly predication, pre-propositional, proto-judgmental, etc. See Robert Sokolowski's creative elaboration of Husserl's thought and his case for *taking-as* to be prior and foundational for predicative ties (in *Presence and Absence*, chap. 5).

¹² Attention to passive synthetic achievements would seem to compel one to give to identity and difference more generic and absolute constitutive functions than Wagner is inclined to give them. See the subsequent discussion.

opposition to non-*a* just as non-*a* is determinate with respect to *a*; thereby if the being presented to the mind, the object, is determined by *a*, non-*a* may be said also to determine the being, but not immediately. What is immediately determined as non-*a* is the determination *a*, but not the being which *a* immediately determines; non-*a* being the condition for the determination which *a* is (109).¹³ Thus the Hegelian position holds for Wagner: Contradiction is necessarily and essentially in all concepts, and all predicates limit one another in a mutually reciprocal way (104).

Furthermore, fundamental considerations broached by Plato (see, for example, *The Sophist*, 21-23; 48-52) require that all of these members of the predication system not be envisaged as enjoying equal stature. The essential determination (*diaeresis*) of something involves a descent from the genus through all the more specific qualities to the ultimate determining specification. The genus remains the identical same ultimate determination throughout the specific determinations. Wagner argues that the dialectics of both Kant and Hegel have their most legitimate senses in so far as they move in the direction of Plato's *diaeresis* and take heed of the overarching generic legislating meaning-spaces in which specific determinations participate and by which they are determined (112). Thus crimson and pink are specifications of red which, in turn, is a specification of color. The dialectical relationship properly realized in the genus is not a coincidence of opposites or contradictions. The genus unites the mutually exclusive specific determinations as a higher category which grounds both contradictory moments (as living may be said to found and unite rational and non-rational and color may be said to found and unite red and non-red).

In contrast to Porphyry's theory that the generic universals are increasingly abstract products which determine proportionately less the species and the individuals qualified by them, the genera must (as Hegel and Lotze insisted) be regarded as the overarching *source* and *ground* of all determinations. They are the producing, constituting (in an exemplary fashion) foundation of all specific and essential determinations. Here emerges Wagner's Hegelian fusion of the post-Kantian noetic-intentional sense of constitution with the Platonic ontological sense. Here, likewise, it becomes evident that the philosophical speculation which he finds missing in Husserl echoes Hegel (see *Encyclopedia*, §§81-82) more than concerns derived from transcendental phenomenology.¹⁴

Before we turn to this Platonic Hegelianism, the sense of *ground* or *source* needs attention. *Qua* generic universal, *qua* generic meaning-space, and *qua* the comprehensive context of the predication field, what here is the sense of ground and source? Because Wagner's focus and point of departure is the noema (with its character of being a claim legitimately to have determined what is

¹³ To which W. Cramer observed that the being present to the mind (object) can be determined also by *b* and *b* also belongs to non-*a*; because we are not further informed concerning the relationship of the predicates we find a situation in which a *b* could determine a being along with *a* and therefore the being would be both *a* and non-*a*. See Cramer, Review of Hans Wagner, *Philosophie und Reflexion*, 73-74; Cramer's own theory of predication is to be found in *Das Absolute und das Kontingente* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1959/1976), esp. 23-38.

¹⁴ Wagner's rooting Hegel in Platonic exemplarism and *diaeresis* invites comparisons with the work of J. N. Findlay. See, for example, "Hegelianism and Platonism", in *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, ed. by J. J. O'Malley (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974).

determinate in itself) his view that a generic universal is the ground as ultimate *meaning-determination* is not equivalent to saying that it is the ground as *cause* of its having been instantiated in certain individual things and not in others, or of its having been instantiated at all. As Butchvarov has noted,

While one who is acquainted with the nature of triangularity is *ipso facto* acquainted with the natures of the shape-qualities of all triangular things, it does not follow that he is also acquainted with the existence of any triangular things or with their other characteristics that are not analytic consequences of their being triangular, e.g., their aerodynamic properties.¹⁵

One can hold the view that the generic universal enjoys a concrete universality, i.e., that it lives in its species and instances, that they live in it, that it, as concrete, is self-specifying and self-instantiating (as both Butchvarov and Wagner do) but this does not seem to justify in any clear sense that the genus is ground and source. Wagner's view that it is ground and source is facilitated by the symmetry he finds in the functioning of generic universals and the functioning of subjectivity. But even this symmetry itself is made possible by his conviction that there is a sound sense in which generic universals are ground and source and *therefore* productive, constituting agencies. The "causality" of "self-instantiation" merits more than the suggestiveness occasioned by metaphor and analogy.

Wagner asks whether the most comprehensive, highest generic universal which encompasses all conceptual and predicative activity, that is, our presencing the world, is determinate. As Aristotle noted (in *de Anima*, 430a 26; 430b 26ff) it must itself be determinate because if it itself were fully indeterminate the most fundamental feature of qualitative determination would be turned on its head: Instead of the generic universal being the ground and sufficient condition for the determinateness of what it determines, that is, for what is "other to itself", it would receive its determinateness through that other whose sense is its being determined by the generic universal (119-20). On the other hand, if the highest determining category is to be determinate, and the determination implies opposition, contradiction, and otherness, must the highest universal not involve another highest genus? But then this would involve another highest genus which would be the unifying same of these two ultimates. What is that which at once makes a unity and which founds the manifold and the hierarchy of meaning-spaces within the predication field? It must be determinate and yet its differentiation cannot be a result of the determinations "from below". The determining other of this unifying all-determining must have a peculiar otherness if the ultimate genus is to be absolutely comprehensive and determining.

Wagner's steadfast speculative journey leads him to wrestle with an absolute (reminiscent of Bradley's) which is, as a relational structure, constitutive of the very determinateness of the members such that they have no determination apart from this constitutive relational structure (123-25). Such a view, well-elaborated in certain Neo-Kantians (Cohen, Natorp and Bauch), seems necessarily to point to the highest generic universal because it must distinguish members of the relation, the relations in which they stand and in which they have their

¹⁵ Panayot Butchvarov, *Resemblance and Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), 181.

determinateness, and finally the constitutive relation itself through which is founded the relation of the members to one another as well as their determinateness. This constitutive relation seems to have the basic feature of unifying all determination and determinateness in the same way as the highest constitutive genus.

Wagner also wrestles with the question of whether this unconditioned encompassing determining universal, now called *the absolute*, is merely the totality of necessary conditions for each and every conditioned conceptual determination (127). Without directly providing arguments he maintains that the absolute as sufficient condition of these conceptual determinations (note here again the problem of the causality of self-instantiation) is of another nature than the necessary conditions because it constitutes the other completely from out of itself. The absolute is alone sufficient for the occurrence and existence of the other. Without the absolute ground the other is nothing, regardless of how many conditions are fulfilled. Wagner, here, clearly is dependent on a sense of causality and wants to defend the view that the absolute is a kind of sufficient condition which, because it accounts for necessary conditions, can never be defined as the totality of necessary conditions.

The absolute of noematic determination is the final ground of all conceptual predicative determinations. And although the ground as such implies necessarily that which it grounds, that which is grounded is not the ground of the ground. The ground can be at once ground as an implication of what it grounds if it is speculatively considered to constitute absolutely that which is other than itself. If it is so envisaged, it may be thereby said to give itself the determinateness which is necessary to it. The absolute is thus self-determining by way of a self-relation to the distinctive other which is founded in it (128). The momentum of speculation encourages that one further specify this absolute — and this by way of an analogical or symmetric plunge: That which is self-determination in the mode of self-relation to that distinctive other which is founded in the self-relating is *thinking*. In an earlier discussion of the noema thinking appeared as an intentional relating to that which is other (being-in-itself) through consciousness' self-determination. Now this intentional feature of thinking has been *deduced*. Further, the aporetic and phenomenological discussions of self-consciousness in relation to consciousness of the other, and vice-versa, here similarly find deductive-speculative "elucidation". If we have appropriated these speculative moves Wagner believes we are entitled to understand why there is no self-consciousness without an antecedent object-consciousness (because the subject without self-reference to the object would remain fully indeterminate); we see why the consciousness of the object makes self-consciousness possible (because the relatedness of the subject to the object enables the subject to have a thematizable determination); foremostly and decisively it reveals the necessary and ineluctable features of self-presence in thought, even in those cases of the mind's disbelief in or unmindfulness of this state of affairs (130).

IV. Toward a Philosophical Theology

Cramer, in his review, raised an important question about the symmetry between the constitutive activity of intentionality and that of greatest generic universal-

ity.¹⁶ In chapter 15 the absolute is the ground of an other which is nothing apart from the ground. But the thinking, that is, the finite human intentionality of Wagner's analysis, is of an other, a being, whose noematic sense indeed is constituted or produced, but produced as existing in itself independent of all constitution. In chapter 15 Wagner's other of the absolute is not a being-in-itself. Therefore if there is to be symmetry between the absolute and thinking, it cannot be with *a* thinking but an absolutely absolute thinking.

At various stages Wagner belatedly indicates awareness of this deficiency in his presentation (for example, on 183, 186, and 230) but it is in the final chapter that the absolute of noematic determination is relativized with respect to the ontologically absolute absolute. This is the speculative move which aims at the most ultimate, that is, at theological-metaphysical, questions. Wagner's theory of the noema holds that knowing is self-determination of thought in accord with the measure of being; thought determines itself by way of the measure of the being which gives itself (410). Only in thinking's self-determination can it do justice to, can it determine, the object in its own determinateness. But whereas thinking is the ground of that which is determinate through thought, the noematic reflection has shown that thinking is not ground of that which is and of the world as the all of being brought to presence. In contrast to Husserl's position that the world is relative being, in need of consciousness for every aspect of its noematic sense and unthinkable without the presencing activity of the mind, here world is to be regarded as absolute. Wagner has in earlier discussions of world as primal project and as objective spirit (346ff) argued that world and subjectivity are internally related, neither making sense without reference to the other. But the features of both the noema, that it presents a task to meet the claims of what is determinate in itself, as well as the "freedom" of constituting thought, urge the conclusion that neither world nor subjectivity is the absolute ground of the other; and therefore neither is absolutely absolute (415). If world cannot be the absolute ground of subjectivity and subjectivity cannot be the absolute ground of world, what might ultimately terminate the speculative journey?

The absoluteness of the subject, or thinking, is not the absoluteness of a necessary being. Granted that there is thinking, then it is absolute in its constitution of the noematic determinations of world. Wagner speculates from the fact of birth, that is, that the being of the particular thinking subject begins, to the conception of a transcendent ground which, on the one hand, does not begin, and, on the other hand, whose nature is not exhausted in its being a ground. A being which is through its being a ground is not genuinely self-subsistent. In Thomistic language, it is not of God's essence to be a creator or to have an other. But even the Thomist formulation of God as *ipsum esse subsistens* is unacceptable for Wagner because he believes that being (*Sein, esse*) is thereby envisaged as the unity of the network of principles thanks to which a being is and is as it is. Being envisaged as ground therefore lacks pure subsistent being-for-itself (418-20).

In a system in which Hegelian speculation and dialectic play such a formative

¹⁶ The problem is the formulation chosen by Wagner in chap. 15, even though in the light of subsequent formulations, esp. those found in the final chap. 34, Cramer finds himself in basic agreement with Wagner. See his Review of Hans Wagner, *Philosophie und Reflexion*, 75-76.

role, the reader might well find this commitment to a God who is timeless and changeless asymmetrical. Why Wagner, on the basis of his own principles, would reject a God in process who is not an exception but the chief exemplification of the system and for whom development, passion, and the other were essential moments is not evident.

This reader likewise is unsatisfied with Wagner's claim that finite subjectivity begins (made on the basis of the "fact" of birth) and his musings on the non-ending finite subjectivity (in spite of the "fact" of death) on the basis of a quasi-Kantian meditation: Subjectivity is aware of itself as having an infinite task of self-formation and is aware that its absoluteness need fear nothing from the world, fate, etc.; therefore it is conceivable that the transcendent ground of subjectivity continue its existence in another form after death (419). It seems to this reviewer that Wagner here slips in and out of a transcendental or reflective standpoint. Because of the fundamental constituting dimension of subjectivity, originating temporality, of which Wagner has a fine summary (339ff), Cramer and Husserl have found the beginning and end of experience very problematic. Whatever we might think about birth and death in the natural, non-transcendental, attitude, for example that experience begins with conception and terminates with death, nevertheless, experience cannot experience its beginning or end. To experience its beginning it would have to have taken advantage of a prior now retained experience; to experience its end it would have to pretend what is after its end and thereby not be at its end.¹⁷

The last chapter of the book does not manifest either the earlier analytic or the later speculative energy that characterizes the rest of the book. Clearly Wagner envisaged it as a prologue to another work, which for this reviewer would indeed be, in all likelihood, another *opus magnum*.¹⁸

¹⁷ Compare W. Cramer, *De Monade* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1954), 88-89; Edmund Husserl, *Analysen der passiven Synthesis* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966), 377-81. Cramer, in one of his latest published statements, placed temporality in the divine and rejected his earlier view that "nature" constituted the original temporality of subjectivity. See *Grundlegung einer Theorie des Geistes*, Appendix, 99-101.

¹⁸ Wagner has written an earlier work on the philosophy of religion which fills out somewhat the hints of this last chap.: *Existenz, Analogie und Dialektik* (Munich/Basel: Ernst Reinhardt, 1953).

GERD BRAND, *WELT, GESCHICHTE, MYTHOS UND POLITIK*

Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978, pp. lii, 250; DM 72.—, \$42.—

Dallas Willard

In this *Work*, Gerd Brand takes his start from the late Husserlian concept of *world*, and, through a series of (presumably) necessary developments, arrives at an answer to the "Sinnfrage": the question about the sense of our human existence (xi). He recognizes that, by these developments beyond the basic concept of *world*, he goes far beyond anything which Husserl himself had to say. The book is, therefore, not intended as a mere interpretation of Husserl, and what I am inclined to regard as among its most valuable contributions — for example, its discussion of the political life and everyday myths (comic strips, television figures, etc.) — concern matters about which, so far as I know, Husserl never attempted any serious comment. Brand proposes, among other things, a new understanding of the political, or at least "...some new principles for science" (x). However — recalling Ricoeur's remark that "...the history of phenomenology is in large part the history of Husserlian heresies" — he announces that he does not intend to produce more of the same. A word might well be put in here in praise of heresy, suggesting that the greatness of a philosopher might be correctly gauged by the number of significant heresies generated from him. Be that as it may, in his manner of working, at least, I think that Brand *intends* to be rather strictly faithful to Husserl, even when developing theses that, in their subject matter go far beyond anything Husserl said. We shall return to this.

The basic outline of the thoughts which Brand develops is very simple: Beginning, as we have noted, with the concept of *world*, and with the essential horizontality that it involves, he argues that there is yet another type of "where-in" than that provided through the ever-receding horizons and horizontality essential to the cognitive "seeing" made ultimate by Husserl. And this other "wherein" is, precisely, the horizon of the world of action or *praxis*: "...[T]he world-experiencing life [[introduced by Husserl]] is not", Brand claims, "just seeing, but also acting, and must be understood as such" (144). Brand finds some few beginnings of a phenomenology of action in the recently published volume of Husserl's papers on intersubjectivity (Vol. XIII). The essential point for his interpretation of these beginnings is that the world in which we live is present to us essentially *as* one in which a society of embodied persons act for long or short-range ends, and as one in which world and self are essentially modified by the processes of life: "Our practical world is a personized world. We

and others have aims, purposes, goals. We act, mix in with the world, transforming it and ourselves" (101). This, according to Brand, means that the world is essentially present to us as an historical world, and "...that we must consider the practical world to be an historical world" (ibid.).

But there are in our world, as lived, many "stories" or histories running concurrently as well as in succession, interrelated in many ways, and all presented as contained within a yet larger story, much as the concrete objects and events within the "seen" world are included always within ever more encompassing horizons. The historical world itself has then, as a totality, an absolute and underivative "wherein", which turns out to be provided only by "myth". This is, as I take it, the fundamental philosophical thesis of the book. The "wherein" of history must be provided by myth, for when we come to seek the general "wherein" of histories as phenomena, we find that it can only be an absolute and underivative history (144). That is, it must be one which is, strictly, timeless in its "beginning" and "end" — for otherwise it will not be absolute, but embedded in its own "beyond", and so on — and which in its extremities is not open to the cognitive grasp of "seeing". (History is thus as transcendent as is the world of "seeing" itself.) This absolute and underivative story, the "wherein" of all histories, is not one which can be narrated in the straightforward sense. This too indicates that it must be a myth, for myth is, indeed, not primarily an account *of* something, but is primarily a reality in its own right (150, 225). I take Brand's view to be that myth is a performance, an enactment, which lives only in a social context. He remarks that the myth is a "text" through which the society in which it lives is, precisely, a society (145). We individual human beings, on the other hand, initially and primarily live myth "...in its fragments" 147), that is, in the grip of particular myths, but these actually or potentially caught up within evermore comprehensive "stories", more or less consciously apprehended. Such a mythologized character of life is the answer to the *Sinnfrage*, according to Brand. Our mode of being as *human* beings is to-be-in-myth, and this, he holds, is even a deeper layer of our essence than is to-be-in-the-world (ibid.).

The basic conceptual development of the book is, then, *from life to action, from action to history, from history to myth*. It is myth and myth alone that makes our life possible, constituting its most fundamental essence as human life. And all human activity, even the most "scientific", is fundamentally governed by mythological structures (motivational patterns) — whatever else may be involved.

Myth itself, now, is described in terms of its basic elements (147ff). As such, it involves a response to a deficiency (*Mangel*). "Deficiency is, philosophically considered, the basic ontological structure of the human type of being" (147). Because myth must provide a self-contained history, its beginning must be of a peculiar type, of a certain "otherness" which sets it off from events in real time and marks it as "holy". It also must be such as to give an ultimate account of the origination of deficiency. "The origin does not lie within time, not in *our* history; it is outside, beyond our history" (165). It lies within a kind of supra-time. The same is true of the "end" of absolute history as presented by myth. Between these two supra-historical poles fall the *dynamics* of the myth, and these constitute the substance of what Brand calls *mythical rationality* (161). Deficiency is always concretized in a specific fashion and within a group of

persons or person-like beings, and the movement is then one of overcoming the lack, a struggle (*Kampf*) to victory. "Myth is the concrete presentation of, and therewith the concrete accommodation with, deficiency" (163; compare 188-89).

While history as a totality is unified for every individual by means of an encompassing (but not necessarily consciously entertained) myth, there are many 'smaller' myths which play through our lives. As illustrations Brand gives *being German* and *being Catholic* (191). But of even less scope are the myths embedded in catch-phrases or slogans, such as "The New Deal", "The quality of life", "Women's Liberation", etc., etc. (237), or in figures such as Mickey Mouse (239), Tarzan and Captain Kirk (239-40). In all of these cases, large and small, we are provided, through a "story", with what older English philosophers such as F. H. Bradley and A. E. Taylor would have called a "felt whole of experience", and by enacting these stories in thought and choice — sometimes with and sometimes without socialized institutions and rituals — we attain a lesser or greater degree of that peculiar type of unity that characterizes the human being.

Brand's analyses of particular issues are on the whole so suggestive and illuminating as to be by themselves worth the price of the book. §39, for example, has an intriguing discussion of the role of *Gestalten* in the organization of the practical world as history, and of the manner in which mood or 'atmosphere' determines the content of that history which we are living at any given time. This is a matter which others have discussed, and which may be most familiar to those American philosophers who have missed Heidegger through the works of John Dewey.¹ But Brand discusses this role of pervasive atmospheres in organizing our world as lived by focussing upon the human *face*, "...the genuinely primal phenomenon of expression" (101). It is in the faces of our fellows and ourselves that the mood or temper of the world in a given time span is primarily displayed. But faces do not stand for something else, to be arrived at by analogical reasoning. I and my familiar others are what we are in the interplay of our faces, and what we are is worn precisely upon our faces. "The face is the ultimate *Gestalt*" (103). And since this life-world of ours is personalized in the manner earlier indicated, it itself has a kind of face (103-04). It carries an 'atmosphere', a 'look', which is its face, "...the ultimately graspable primal form of the life-world" (105). This totalized pervasive quality (or qualities) is, then, the ultimate determinant of the character of our world, not the segregated parts and relations which go into that world. (Brand quotes Herbert Plügge's interesting observation that the more intimate I am with someone, the more transparent their face is, and the less I am able to describe its particular features.)

Similarly intriguing are Brand's comments on political order (and disorder). In this realm, too, the fundamental movement is from deficiency through struggle to redemption (222). This schema makes much sense of the discourse and behavior of most political leaders. The social sciences have the two-fold task, among others, of myth analysis and myth critique. The former allows us to understand the course of political events in terms of the mythological "rationality" operant within them. The environing cultural conditions also must be

¹ See for example the essay "Qualitative Thought", in *Philosophy and Civilization* (New York: Capricorn, 1963), 93-116.

analyzed, since they are what *fill out* the structures of mythological rationality. ("A Kurd will not react to what he feels to be repression by becoming a hippie" [223]).

Myth critique, as well as arranging, in general, various operant myths in relationship to one another, can show how various justifications of action do not agree, how myths or myth-fragments are inconsistent with each other, and how some myths are spurious, as is the case with political messianism. This latter shows itself *not* to be a myth through its attempts to organize political life by sacralizing itself in the (obviously false) divinization of "the leader", by conflating supra-time with the time of real political events, and by proclaiming the present state to be the final one. All of this is false of political reality, 'true' only of the ultimately inclusive story (227-28). Brand provides a list of 112 questions (233-35) to serve in myth analysis of political phenomena generally. The forcing of spurious myth upon life is, I presume, regarded by him as inhuman, and therefore to be identified and avoided.

There are many other fine passages in this book — not least those dealing with the mythologies of everyday life (237-42). But I now wish to say something about the general character of Brand's philosophizing, and specifically about its relation to Husserl's.

The manner of Brand's work much more resembles that of, say, Gabriel Marcel or Karl Jaspers, than it does that of Husserl. He provides observations which show much careful observation and profound thought, and these observations frequently carry within themselves a notable weight of conviction and illumination. This is one way of doing philosophy, and not the worst way by any means. However, it certainly was not Husserl's way, and I believe that Brand's work loses much by not conforming more closely to Husserl's methods. In this connection let us consider the transition from the "wherein" of "seeing" to the "wherein" of action, already referred to above. The justification for introducing a more encompassing and (allegedly) more fundamental practico-historical "wherein" does not here lie in a painstaking examination of the essential structure of action to *see* if it involves anything substantially like the intentional adumbrations of conscious acts so well-known in Husserl's analyses. Certainly there are "motivational" structures present within action, and these are not necessarily all of the cognitive type. But a careful analysis would be required to show that they generate such a "wherein" of action and history as Brand claims, and to explicate the sense in which the horizon of seeing and the alleged horizon of acting are indeed both *horizons*. In this regard we may say that Brand's discussions tend to be more suggestive than analytical. He does not, so far as I can tell, begin to base his claims upon a careful noematic analysis of action and its involvements, nor upon any similarly careful procedure. Rather he contents himself with more or less direct claims concerning what must be the case with action — which are more or less convincing. This leaves such fundamental points as whether or not there *is* an action or historical horizon, and exactly how it resembles and differs from that of seeing, really quite up in the air so far as *insight* is concerned.

The way for such looseness is, I believe, prepared by the allegation of "many different rationalities" (75), many different "language games" or many different "theoretical contexts" — which is today almost a dogma, and on both sides of the English Channel. These "many" are treated by Brand as embedded within

the general motivational texture of our historical existence. But rationality as a coherent motivational structure — a “knowing how”, to use Gilbert Ryle’s terminology, instead of a mere “knowing that” — and especially when such ‘rationality’ is combined with a certain view of the material or concrete apriori (4-5 and elsewhere), does seem to loosen the demands for precision and rigor. I believe that this is even more true for those who have slipped (or leaped) away — as, today, who has not? — from the ideal of philosophy as a “rigorous science”.

It sometimes seems suggested that the reason why Husserl himself did not see what certain subsequent philosophers claim to understand about action and history is just that he did not have time in his life span to get that far, or, perhaps, that he was inhibited by his commitment to a rationalistic type of rationality, if one may so speak, ultimately based upon intuition and his “principle of all principles” (5). I want to counter-suggest that he saw very clearly indeed that motivational structures were often quite blind cognitively, and that he was simply unwilling to speak of justificatory relations (*Begründungszusammenhang*), in the manner of Brand, which could not at last be brought to rest in the appropriate type of “seeing”. Here is a radical difference between him and many of his successors, who yet claim allegiance to him and praise him as the greatest philosopher of the Modern period. Just as philosophy in the English-speaking countries has — with its many varieties of conceptual relativism — in general returned to the position which provoked Moore’s “Refutation of Idealism” and “Proof of an External World”, so, I fear, Continental philosophy generally tends toward the very Anthropologisms and relativisms which Husserl found is necessary to refute at the outset of his career.

Can it be that Brand senses something of this for his own position, and *therefore* in the very last paragraph of his book finds it necessary to disavow Voluntarism or “Decisionism” in his theory of rationality? However, in his disavowal he only gets so far as recourse to “insight” governed ultimately by socialized myth, which is *not* in turn grounded simply in insight in the sense associated with Husserl’s Principles of all Principles. For Husserl, Voluntarism is ruled out by a grasp of how things are, not by motivational connections, even if they are called historical and mythological. I believe that Husserl was on the right track in all of this, and — contrary to the overwhelming tendency of both Continental and Anglo-American philosophy at present — that nothing is really gained by extending “rationality” to social processes which, however harmoniously, constrain our action and thought.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the case of articles and reviews not originally written for *CGP* that are carried in translation, the Editors assume no responsibility for the accuracy of the bibliographical references. Notwithstanding, whenever, in the course of reworking the notes for an English language readership, an error is discovered, an endeavor is made, with the cooperation of the author, to correct it.

Indiana University Press has published *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* by Martin Heidegger in English translation by Michael Heim, and the book is now available for \$25.00 (\$31.50 outside the U.S. and Canada).

An English translation of Otto Pöggeler's *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* is in preparation, and it will be published by Humanities Press.

Professor Alphonso Lingis of Pennsylvania State University has become the new editor of a series in Contemporary European Philosophy to be published by the State University of New York Press. Suggestions or queries may be addressed to Professor Lingis at the Pennsylvania State University, 246 Sparks Bldg., University Park, Pennsylvania, 16802 USA.

A six volume English translation of Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works*, edited by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, will be published by Princeton University Press. Volumes 1-3 present Dilthey's main theoretical writings on the nature of the human sciences; volume 4, essays on hermeneutics and historical studies; volume 5, Dilthey's writings on aesthetics; volume 6, essays on the theory of world-views, ethics, educational theory, and religion. Volume 5, entitled *Poetry and Experience*, is scheduled to appear early in 1985. Volume 1, entitled *Introduction to the Human sciences*, is scheduled to appear late in 1986.

A Manual of Style (for the present volume, the Thirteenth Edition [Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1982], is *CGP*'s authority in matters of form, except as qualified by our "Instructions Pertaining to the Preparation of Translations and Guidelines for the Preparation of Reviews for *CGP*". The following special usages will be of interest to the reader:

1) In the case of a translation, notes listed under small roman numerals are by the translator or, where specifically indicated, by the Coordinator or person responsible for the editing.

2) **Brackets and Parentheses:** If an author introduces a term, short phrase, or brief explanation into a translation which does not appear in the published German edition, this material is placed within pointed brackets: "<...>". An ellipse within pointed brackets indicates that something in the original has been omitted at the author's request.

Author-determined changes — which will sometimes be very minor — are thus set off from words and phrases occasionally introduced by the translator or Editor to render a translation more understandable, which are indicated by [...]] or, in the case in which a lower case letter is capitalized or vice versa, by [...].

Simple square brackets *in other usages* may occur within parentheses, or in series.

Foreign words introduced into the text of a translation that occur in the original German are placed in simple parentheses, which have the normal range of other usages, as well.

3) **Single Quotations:** Most of the many admissible usages of single quotes are adequately covered in *A Manual of Style*. The admission of the third of the usages here considered, as a concession to a fairly common practice within philosophical literature, principally occasions this special consideration. Single quotes may be used (i) as scope indicators around a phrase, in its initial occurrence, employed to translate a foreign term for which there is no appropriate single term in English, (ii) to indicate a special or restricted sense for a term, (iii) to indicate the *mention*, as distinguished from the *use* of a term, the latter being indicated by double quotes.

The first and second usages can be especially useful in translation. The third usage, or a surrogate, will sometimes be found essential to conveying the meaning of a German text. Seeing that both the second and third usages pertain to single terms, however, they tend to be incompatible. The problem may be resolved in either of two ways: (i) The first resolution grows out of the following supplementary instruction: In the case of the first and second usages, the affected phrase or term, *upon its first occurrence within the text*, shall be followed by a foreign word being translated, in parentheses, or, if such is needed, by a translation note. The resolution: In the case of the second usage, the translator may elect to place the foreign term translated (to be in parentheses) following the term enclosed in single quotes, *not merely the first time in which it occurs, but each time it occurs*. The foreign word in brackets will then serve as a flag to indicate the usage of single quotes which is in force. (ii) A translator may indicate mention by placing a term in italics, rather than by the use of single quotes, explaining this choice in a translation note. This resolution will have appeal where the second usage occurs with some frequency and where competing usages of italics can be avoided.

4) **Scope Indicators:** Parenthetical page references within the text of a review originating in English may follow a phrase, a sentence, or a group of sentences (the latter usually constituting a paragraph) being quoted or paraphrased. Where the reference pertains only to the phrase or sentence it immediately follows, this is indicated by the placement of the formal punctuation mark — usually a comma or a period — following the parenthesis.

Whitehead's simple declaration, "Objectification is abstraction" (p. 62), reflects his philosophy of science more adequately than it does his metaphysical orientation. [Not: "...abstraction," (p. 62)]

Hegel writes: "What philosophy begins with must be either mediated or immediate, and it is easy to show that it can neither be the one nor the other; thus either way of beginning is refuted" (p. 67). [Not: "...refuted." (p. 67)]

Where the page reference serves to document more than one sentence, it stands free of punctuation. In this case the paragraphing or some other stylistic device serves to co-determine the scope.

In the case of translated articles or reviews, parenthetical page references, where such occur, are placed within periods or commas, *except where it appears fairly evident that the reference covers more than the phrase or sentence terminated by one of these punctuation marks*, in which case it is placed outside of the punctuation.

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